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ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

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CANADA

THE VAULT OF HORROR

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER

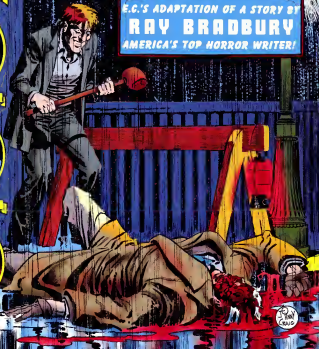


THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH

IN THIS ISSUE:
E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!



J. TAY
CRAB

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEN, HEN! THANK NADES, YOU'RE ON TIME. I HAVE BEEN EAGERLY AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL... FOR AFTER MUCH SCROUNGING AROUND IN THE DEEPEST RECESSES OF THE VAULT, I DISCOVERED AN ANCIENT AND CRUMBING VOLUME WHICH CONTAINED A CLASSIC TALE. I'M CERTAIN YOU WILL ENJOY THIS ONE, SO SETTLE YOUR SKELETON AND PREPARE FOR A TRULY MORBID AND IRONIC STORY ENTITLED...

EASEL KILL YA!



THE MISERABLE WRETCH WANDERED AIMLESSLY THROUGH SILENT, FOGGY STREETS. NISSING RAIN-DROPS PELTED HIS UNCOVERED HEAD, RAN DOWN HIS FACE, MINGLING WITH TEARS. TOWERING STREET LAMPS FORMED HIS SHADOW INTO GROTESQUE SHAPES ON SOLEMN BUILDINGS, PAINLESSLY ELONGATED IT TO EXPLORE ALONG THE WET, SHIMMERING PAVEMENT INTO THE DARKNESS...



RAINWATER GURGLED ANGRILY IN THE GUTTER, REACHED OUT, CAUGHT, AND CARRIED EVERYTHING IT COULD WITH IT INTO THE SEWER DEPTHS. THE MISERABLE WRETCH SHUFFLED ON, AND ONCE, AN AGONIZED SOB ERUPTED FROM HIS LIPS TO BE SNATCHED AWAY BY THE WIND...



HIS FOOTSTEPS CARRIED HIM OUT ON THE BRIDGE HE GRIPPED THE RAIL WITH TREMBLING, WHITENED KNUCKLES, STARED UNSEEING INTO THE BLACKNESS AT THE WATER HE KNEW WAS SOMEWHERE BELOW, AND LISTENED TO THE VICIOUS WHISPERINGS OF THE RAIN...



HE STOOD THERE FOR LONG MINUTES, THINKING A MILLION THOUGHTS, SEEING A MILLION VISIONS, RECALLING A MILLION MEMORIES...



...BUT I'M ONLY TWENTY-NINE! MOST PEOPLE ARE JUST BEGINNING TO LIVE AT TWENTY-NINE! WHY AM I TRYING TO END IT? SUICIDE? IS THAT THE REAL SOLUTION? WHY HAVE THEY DRIVEN ME TO THIS?

A SPARKLING BUBBLE OF FEMALE LAUGHTER IN A PASSING TAXI, GONE IN AN INSTANT. HE WHIRLED AT THE SOUND...



GO AHEAD! LAUGH AT ME! EVERYONE LAUGHS AT ME! (SOB!) WHY CAN'T SOMEONE UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL?!

HE STUMBLED INTO THE ROADWAY ON WATERY LEGS...



I'M AN ARTIST! I PAINT PICTURES! WHY DO YOU ALL HATE ME? (SOB!) WHY CAN'T YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE?! WHY? (SOB!) WHY?!

HE CRUMPLED TO HIS KNEES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, FIST RAISED SHAKILY IN DEFIANCE...



I HATE YOU! I WANT YOU TO SUFFER AS I HAVE! I WANT YOU TO FEEL THE PAIN I'VE FELT (SOB!) I WANT YOU TO KNOW THE HUNGER... THE LONELINESS!

HE WAS ONLY DIMLY AWARE OF THE MOTOR'S ROAR BEHIND HIM, ONLY HALF-HEARD THE COMPLAINING SQUEAL OF TIRES SKIDDING ON SLIPPERY PAVEMENT, BUT HE CLEARLY SAW THE CAR BULLET PAST HIM, SPIN OUT OF CONTROL, FLIP OVER! HE SAW THE BODY THROWN IN THE AIR, HEARD IT STRIKE THE GROUND, MEMORIZED THE SOUND. HE LISTENED TO THE CACOPHONY OF GRINDING METAL AND SHATTERING GLASS, FELT THE JARRING IMPACT AS THE AUTO SLAMMED AGAINST THE CONCRETE BARRIER!



THE WOMAN TUMBLED FROM THE ACCORDIONED MACHINE, PLATINUM HAIR NOW TINTED RED, FLESH ONCE POWDER-WHITE NOW WINE-COLORED! DELICATE, JEWELLED FINGERS CLUTCHED HER FACE, CHANGED COLOR WITH THE STREAMING BLOOD THAT STAINED HER CLOTHES, DRIPPED TO THE GROUND AND FUSED, DISSOLVED WITH THE FROlickING GUTTER WATER. SHE TEETERED CRUNKENLY...AND FELL!



HE RAN, LAUGHING, FROM THE SCENE. IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW THAT OTHERS COULD FEEL PAIN, COULD SUFFER AND GRIEVE! IT FILLED HIM WITH A DEEP SATISFACTION. HE WAS OVERJOYED, ELATED, *INSPIRED!* BABBLING TO HIMSELF, HE CLIMBED THE RICKETY STAIRS TO HIS ROOM WHERE HE PAINTED FURIOUSLY, ENTRANCED, THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF THE NIGHT...



THE COLO, BLEAK LIGHT OF MORNING FOUND THE ARTIST SITTING DUMBLY ON HIS COT, STARING WITH REDDENED EYES AT THE FINISHED PAINTING...



SOME TIME LATER THE ARTIST SPOKE EXCITEDLY WITH A SMALL, LECHEROUS OLD MAN WHOSE GINLET EYES RAVAGED THE PAINTING...

THEN... YOU LIKE IT? YOU'LL BUY IT? IT'S MAGNIFICENT! HEH! PROFOUNDLY FILTHY, YET MAGNIFICENT! I'LL GIVE YOU A HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR IT!



ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS IS A LOT OF MONEY TO A PAUPER, BUT WITH RENT TO PAY, CLOTHES AND PAINTS TO BUY, AND AN EMPTY BELLY TO BE FILLED, IT DOESN'T LAST LONG.

...MONEY'S ALMOST GONE! HO-HUM, GUESS I'D BETTER KNOCK OFF ANOTHER SACRILEGIOUS PAINTING FOR THE OLD MAN!



BRUSHES IN HAND, HE STOOD BEFORE THE EASEL, STRAINING FOR AN IDEA. THE GREATER PART OF A DAY WENT BY, AND STILL HIS CANVAS WAS BLANK...

IT'S NO USE! I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO TURN OUT ANOTHER PICTURE WITH EASE, BUT I CAN'T! I'VE BEEN FOOLING MYSELF!



HE SLUMPED TO HIS COT, LET THE BRUSHES SLIP FROM HIS FINGERS AND CLATTER TO THE FLOOR. HE FOUGHT TO HOLD BACK THE TEARS OF RAGE AND RESENTMENT THAT WELLED WITHIN HIM...



ONE OLD MAN LIKES MY WORK. ONE OLD MAN WITH A DISEASED MIND LIKED THE SINFUL, WICKED PICTURE INSPIRED BY THE BLOOD AND PAIN I SAW IN THAT AUTO ACCIDENT. AND THE REST OF THE WORLD SHUNS ME!



BUT WAIT! THEY'D FEEL DIFFERENTLY IF I WERE A SUCCESS. IF I HAD MONEY THEY WOULDN'T TURN FROM ME. THEY'D LOOK UP TO ME, SMILE AT ME. THEY'D WANT TO TALK TO ME, NOT RUN FROM MY SIGHT. AND THEY'D GATHER 'ROUND ME AND THRILL JUST TO TOUCH MY HAND. THEY'D GROVEL AT MY FEET AND PLEAD WITH ME TO CAST THEM A GLANCE... A WORD! ALL THIS IF I HAD MONEY.

A BLACK REALIZATION ILLUMINATED HIS FACE...

MONEY. I CAN GET MONEY... FROM THE OLD MAN! HE'LL BUY PAINTINGS FROM ME IF THEY'RE LIKE THE OTHER ONE. AND IF I HAVE TO WATCH THEIR BLOOD SPILL AND SEE THEIR AGONY TO GET INSPIRATION... ALL THE BETTER! I *LIKE* TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE IN PAIN!



THE EVENING FOG CLOSED IN AROUND THE HUNCHER FIGURE STANDING ON THE BRIDGE. ALL EVIDENCE OF THE PREVIOUS ACCIDENT HAD LONG SINCE BEEN REMOVED, BUT THE ARTIST WAITED FOR HOURS... HOPING, PRAYING THAT ANOTHER ACCIDENT WOULD SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY OCCUR...



HE LOOKED AT THE DETOUR SIGNS WITH THEIR RED LANTERNS, USED TO RE-ROUTE TRAFFIC WHILE THE SMASHED AUTO HAD BEEN CLEARED AWAY. HE LOOKED AT THEM STANDING IDLY, INNOCENTLY ON THE WALK... AND THE HOURS SLIPPED BY...



IT WAS ALMOST MIDNIGHT WHEN, IN DESPAIR, HE LEFT THE BRIDGE TO PROMY THE STREETS. *SOMEWHERE* IN THE CITY THERE MUST BE ANGUISH AND BLOODSHED. WHY DID THEY *HIDE* IT FROM HIM? WHY DID THEY FRUSTRATE AND TORMENT HIM SO? HE *MUST* FIND INSPIRATION...



AT THREE A.M. HE AGAIN TRUGGED OUT ON THE BRIDGE. THE CITY HAD SUCCESSFULLY HIO ITS SINS FROM HIM THUS FAR, BUT HE WAS NOT TO BE PUT OFF. HE LIFTED THE DETOUR SIGNS AND SET THEM IN THE ROAD, ANGLING THEM TOWARD THE BARRIER...



HE HAD TO WAIT BUT A SHORT WHILE BEFORE HE HEARD THE HUMMING OF TIRES ON MOIST PAVEMENT CRUWHING RAPIDLY NEAR. THE CAR ROCKETED OUT OF THE FOG AND WITH A SCREECHING OF BRAKES, SWERVED TO AVOID THE SIGNS! HE LAUGHED DIABOLICALLY AS IT CAREENED AND CRASHED INTO THE WALL...



HE RACED TO THE WRECKAGE AND PEERED INSIDE, LAUGHING AS HE SAW THE BROKEN BODIES, FLOWING BLOOD. HE REJOICED IN THE MOANS AND SCREAMS, DANCED MERRILY AND CLAPPED HIS HANDS AND LAUGHED TILL HIS HEAD SPUN IN A WHIRLPOOL OF SUBLIME INSPIRATION...



MORNING. EXHAUSTION. THE FINISHED PAINTING. THE OLD MAN CACKLING AND GIVING HIM MONEY... DELIRIUM...

POSITIVELY FANTASTIC! HEH, HEH! SUCH SADISTIC LUST! YOU MUST PAINT *MORE* OF THESE FOR ME! I'LL PAY YOU *WELL*!



NIGHT. THE FOG-SHROUDED BRIDGE. CONFUSED, HATEFUL EMOTIONS AND THE IMPATIENCE OF WAITING. THE DECISION TO WAIT NO LONGER FOR AN ACCIDENT. THE SHEER THRILL OF VICIOUSLY BEATING A PASSERBY!



HIS ROOM. THE STRAW GUT. FEELING AGAIN THE WARM BLOOD, HEARING AGAIN THE TERRIFIED CRIES, RELIVING THE ENTIRE EXPERIENCE... BUT *PAINTING NOTHING!* NOT CARING TO PAINT. JUST REVELING IN THE GLORIOUS SATISFACTION...



MORNING AGAIN... A BLANK CANVAS... AND A REALIZATION.

OH, GOD, I MUST BE *INSANE!* IS MY MIND SO TWISTED THAT I CAUSE BLOOD TO FLOW MERELY FOR THE THRILL I DERIVE FROM ITS SIGHT? AM I SO ENVOUS OF THE WORLD THAT I REJOICE IN THEIR SUFFERING? WHEN IT INSPIRED A PAINTING, THERE WAS A *PURPOSE*... BUT NOW... NOW MY DEPRAVITY HAS REACHED ITS LOWEST DEPTHS! I'VE GOT TO *STOP* THIS MADNESS!



FOR DAYS HE REMAINED IN HIS SHABBY ROOM TRYING TO STIFLE THE URGE TO HURT SOMEONE, TRYING TO FORGET THE SATISFACTION HE RECEIVED FROM PUNISHING THE WORLD AS THE WORLD HAD SO OFTEN PUNISHED HIM...



HE PACED THE SMALL FLOOR, ANIMAL-LIKE, SMOKELESS CHAINS OF CIGARETTES, DRANK HIMSELF INTO A STUPOR, AND STILL HE FELT THE NEED FOR RELEASE... STILL HE HEARD THE OLD MAN'S PLEAS FOR MORE PICTURES, FELT THE OLD MAN'S MONEY, DREAMED OF THE THINGS HE COULD BUY...



AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS STRUGGLE, WHEN HIS STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION WERE ALMOST AT THE BREAKING POINT AND HE WAS DISCOURAGED AND MISERABLE BEYOND WORDS, THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. HE OPENED IT, AND THERE SHE WAS, SMILING AND BEAUTIFUL, FILLING EVERY CORNER OF HIS BARREN ROOM WITH A WARM BRILLIANCE. IT STAGGERED HIM...



SHE HAD JUST MOVED IN UPSTAIRS AND NEEDED HIS AID TO COMPLETE SOME SMALL TASK. HE ACCEPTED GLAOLY... AND WHILE HE HELPED HER, LISTENED TO HER TENDER VOICE, REVELED IN HER MELODIOUS LAUGH, HER RADIANT LOVELINESS, EYES UNBELIEVING, HE MARVELED AT THIS WONDROUS CREATURE WHO LESS-ENEH HIS TENSIONS, DISPELLED HIS HATES, HIS FEARS... AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES, HE HEARD HIMSELF LAUGH...



THAT NIGHT HE SLEPT THE SLEEP OF THE INNOCENT, AND DREAMED THE DREAMS OF THE PEACEFUL. IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, HE REALIZED SHE LIKED HIS COMPANY AND WANTED TO BE WITH HIM. HE PAINTED HER OFTEN. HE PAINTED OTHER THINGS, ALSO... PLEASANT, SOOTHING PICTURES...



BUT THOUGH HE LAUGHED QUITE EASILY NOW, THERE OWELT WITHIN HIM THE GUILT AND SHAME OF HIS PAST. HE LONGED TO TELL HER OF THESE THINGS, TO CLEANSE HIMSELF AS SHE WAS CLEAN...



SO HE CONFESSED THE HORRIBLE EMOTIONS, THE VILE DEEDS THAT ONCE CONSUMED HIS SOUL, BLACK-ENEH HIS HEART AND CAUSED HIM TO DESPISE THE GOODNESS IN LIFE. SHE LISTENED...

... I WAS SO CONFUSED. I STARTED OUT LOVING LIFE, BUT WITH EACH FAILURE I BECAME EMBITTERED. I FELT THE WORLD WAS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO FRUSTRATE AND WOUND ME, SO I FOUGHT BACK...



IT ISN'T EASY TO THINK CLEARLY WHEN YOU'RE SO ALL ALONE. WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT AND EVERYONE SEEMS AGAINST YOU, IT'S ONLY *NATURAL* TO FIGHT BACK... EVEN IF YOUR METHODS ARE PERVERTED! BUT YOUR MIND HAS BECOME SO MIXED UP THAT *ANY* WAY OUT SEEMS ALL RIGHT!



PERHAPS IT'S MERELY THAT BECAUSE A MAN HAS SO MANY EMOTIONS INSIDE HIM, ANYTHING THAT IGNITES THEM WILL CAUSE THEM TO EXPLODE. THE MORE EMOTIONS THERE ARE INSIDE AND THE LONGER THEY'VE BEEN CONFINED, THE GREATER THE EXPLOSION. AND IF THEY CAN'T FIND ESCAPE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION... THEY'RE *BOUND TO BACKFIRE*...



JEALOUSY, FOR INSTANCE, AND *LOVE* ARE VERY CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER. ONLY A FINE LINE SEPARATES THEM. *JEALOUSY* IS A FORM OF HATE... BUT, ACTUALLY, IT'S ONLY LOVE, INVERTED!

I GUESS THAT'S BEEN MY PROBLEM. I HAD SO MUCH LOVE WITHIN ME THAT WHEN THE WORLD SHUNNED ME AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT, I TURNED THE LOVE INSIDE OUT... AND IT BECAME HATE!



WHAT AM I TO DO?

THE DOCTOR ... THEY BROUGHT HER IN LAST NIGHT... HIT AND RUN VICTIM. SHE CAME OUT OF HER COMA LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, BUT I'M AFRAID THERE'S VERY LITTLE HOPE. HER CONDITION IS *EXTREMELY SERIOUS.*

ANYTHING??

DO IT, AND HE WANTS \$3,000 FOR THE JOB! OBVIOUSLY, YOU CAN'T...

THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS?? MIGHT AS WELL BE A MILLION... BUT HE COULD GET IT! THERE WAS *ONE* WAY TO GET IT... A *PAINTING FOR THE OLD MAN*. THE ARTIST WENT INSTINCTIVELY TO THE BRIDGE...



THE LONG WAITING, AND THEN THE CLICKING OF HEELS, THE FIGURE DISEMBODYING ITSELF FROM THE MIST AND RAIN, FUSING INTO SOLIDITY. THE STRUGGLE, THE HACKING AND BLOODYING, *THE SNAPPING OF THE NECK!* THE THRILLING, GLOATING, DIZZIFYING REEL OF SATISFACTION...



HIS ROOM. THE HECTIC WELDING OF BRUSHES ON CANVAS, LASTING TILL LATE THE NEXT AFTERNOON. THE OLD MAN'S REFUSAL TO PAY THE STEEP PRICE! THE QUARREL AND THE FIGHT... THE TAKING OF THE MONEY BY FORCE...



THE HEADLONG DASH BACK TO THE HOSPITAL THROUGH DARKENING STREETS, DUBBLING WITH THE HAPPY KNOWLEDGE THAT AT LAST HE HAD DEFEATED THE WORLD. THEIR FINAL ATTEMPT TO RUIN HIM HAD *FAILED*, FOR DIDN'T HE HAVE THE *MONEY*? JOYFULLY, HE RUSHED IN.



THE PAINED LOOK IN THE DOCTOR'S EYES. THE NURSE LOWERING HER HEAD, TURNING HER BACK...

I'M... I'M AFRAID I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU, YOU SEE, THE ONE MAN WHO COULD HAVE PERFORMED THE OPERATION... WAS *BRUTALLY MURDERED* LAST NIGHT WHILE CROSSING THE BRIDGE ON HIS WAY TO THE HOSPITAL! MUST HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF A *MANIAC*... *NECK BROKEN... HACKED TO PIECES... HORRIBLE!*



THE MISERABLE WRETCH SAT HOOLED ON THE BENCH IN THE DARK CORRIDOR, LITTERING THE FLOOR AROUND HIS FEET WAS A GREEN CONFUSION, USELESS AND FORGOTTEN. HE SAT THERE, TEARS STREAMING DOWN HIS CHEEKS, TINY, PITIFUL SOBS RACKING HIS BODY. HE SAT THERE, STARING BLANKLY AT THE WALL, LISTENING TO THE CLOCK OVERHEAD RELENTLESSLY TICK AWAY THE SECONDS... AND THEN *SHE WOULD BE DEAD*...



HEH, HEH! CARE FOR A GAME OF *BRIDGE*, ANYONE? YOU BE THE *DUMMY*! BY DOING THOSE PAINTINGS, THE ARTIST GAVE HIS GIRL THE *BRUSH OFF!* OIL I KNOW IS, NOBODY BETTER GO WALKING ON THAT BRIDGE LATE AT NIGHT! HEH, HEH! WELL, I SEE THE *GRIPP-KEEPER* IS CHOMPING AT THE BIT, SO I'LL LEAVE BEFORE HE STARTS CHOMPING ME! HE'S GOT A *PEACHY* STORY FOR YOU, SO UNTIL NEXT TIME *DROP DEAD!*



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH. AND NOW IT'S YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER'S* TURN TO GURGLE YOUR BLOOD. CRAWL INTO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*, CRUMBS, PLOP DOWN ON THAT TREE STUMP THERE, HELP YOURSELF TO SOME FRUIT, AND WHILE YOU'RE MUNCHING, I'LL NARRATE THE NAUSEATING NOVELETTE I CALL...

A PEACH^{OF} A PLOT!

IT'S HER, ALL RIGHT, LIEUTENANT. WHAT'S LEFT OF HER, THAT IS! AFTER SEVEN YEARS...IT AIN'T VERY MUCH!

SKULL'S SHATTERED. LOOKS LIKE HE BLUGEONED HER TO DEATH...

OKAY, BOYS. GET HER DOWN-TOWN FOR A COMPLETE AUTOPSY. CAREFUL OF THAT TREE. NOW. THAT GOES TOO!

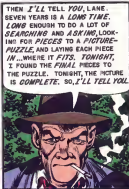


MICHAEL LANE TURNED AWAY, FIGHTING THE NAUSEA THAT SWEEPED OVER HIM. BESIDE HIM, LIEUTENANT PHIL OOLAN, HOMICIDE, STARED AT THE CORPSE LYING AMID THE TWISTING TANGLING ROOTS OF THE YOUNG PEACH TREE. HE STARED AT THE HOLES WHERE EYES ONCE SHINED, AT THE MOUTH THAT WAS ONCE SO KISSABLE, AT THE CRAWLING FLESH OF THE ONCE LOVELY NECK, AND AT THE TREE TRUNK ERUPTING FROM THE ROTTED CHEST...

I ALWAYS *KNEW* YOU MURDERED HER, LANE. I ALWAYS KNEW IT.

I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT IF IT WEREN'T FOR... FOR...





"IT WAS **FRUSTRATING**, WASN'T IT, LANE? YOU **WANTED** SARAH TO MIND. IT WAS PART OF THE **SCHEME**. YOU EVEN BEGAN TAKING **ADVANTAGE**...TRYING TO **ANTAGONIZE** HER."

BUT, MIKE. YOU CAN USE MY CAR WHENEVER YOU WANT TO. WHY DO WE NEED TWO.

I WANT MY OWN, SARAH! I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO ASK YOU ALL THE TIME...

"AND FINALLY SHE BROKE DOWN. FINALLY...SHE BLEW UP. AND THOUGH YOU TRIED TO ACT HURT, SECRETLY YOU WERE GLAD..."

A NEW CAR! YOUR OWN APARTMENT IN TOWN! MORE CLOTHES THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY NEED! IS IT TRUE, MIKE? IS IT TRUE WHAT THEY'RE ALL SAYING?

SARAH!

"...SO YOU PRESSED THE ARGUMENT..."

IT IS TRUE, ISN'T IT? THAT'S ALL YOU MARRIED ME FOR! MY MONEY!

SO WHAT! IT'S A FAIR TRADE. WE EACH HAVE WHAT WE WANTED.

"...CREATED QUITE A SCENE..."

YOU...NEVER WANTED...ME! YOU NEVER LOVED ME!

THE DOUGH, BABY! I LOVED THE DOUGH!

"...AND THE SERVANTS HEARD IT ALL. JUST WHAT YOU WANTED..."

THEN...THEN IT'S NO USE GOING ON...SOS... LIKE...THIS!

THERE'S THE DOOR!

"YOU'D TIMED IT PERFECTLY, EH, LANE? THE SERVANTS HAD GONE FOR THE DAY BY THE TIME SARAH HAD FINISHED PACKING..."

I'M... LEAVING, MIKE. I'M GOING TO GET A DIVORCE.

YOU'RE A LITTLE FOOL, SARAH. HOW COULD YOU BELIEVE THAT OF ME?

"IT WAS WHAT SHE **WANTED** TO HEAR, **WASN'T** IT, LANE? SUDDENLY SHE WAS IN YOUR ARMS AND YOU WERE HOLDING HER QUIVERING BODY AND HATING HER AND SAYING THE THINGS YOU HAD TO SAY..."

OH, MIKE. MIKE. TELL ME IT ISN'T TRUE.

OF COURSE IT ISN'T TRUE, DARLING. I MARRIED YOU BECAUSE I LOVED YOU. YOU'LL SEE. I'LL MAKE IT UP. TOMORROW, I'LL LOOK FOR A JOB. REALLY...

'THAT LAST NIGHT WAS FUN, WASN'T IT LANE? MAKING LOVE TO HER, AND WAITING... WAITING TO CATCH HER OFF GUARD...'

I'M SO ASHAMED, MIKE! I'M SORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS I SAID.

I'M THE ONE THAT'S SORRY, HONEY!

'AND THEN YOU FOUND YOUR OPPORTUNITY! REMEMBER, LANE? SHE WAS SITTING IN THE LIVING ROOM MUNCHING ON SOME FRUIT. THE BLINDS WERE DRAWN. IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT...'

HUNGRY, SARAH?

A LITTLE...

'REMEMBER THE PEACH, LANE? SHE HAD A MOUTHFUL WHEN YOU STRUCK HER WITH THE POKER...'

GGGGHHHH...

'REMEMBER THE GURGLING SOUND THAT SHE MADE AND THE PEACH JUICE DRIZZLING OUT OF HER MOUTH AND HER EYES BULGING AND HER FACE TURNING BLUE AS YOU BEAT HER TO DEATH? REMEMBER, LANE...?'

'REMEMBER HOW YOU CARRIED HER LIMP BODY OUT OF THE HOUSE AND BURIED IT OUT IN THE BACK GARDEN...?'

'THEN, YOU BURNED HER SUITCASE... THE ONE SHE'D PACKED... IN THE FIREPLACE...'

'...AND CLEANED UP. REMEMBER HOW YOU SCOOPED UP THE HALF-CHEWED MOUTHFUL OF PEACH FROM THE RUG WHERE IT HAD FALLEN FROM HER LIPS AND THREW IT AWAY TOGETHER WITH THE UNEATEN HALF OF THE PEACH...?'

LIUTENANT DOLAN POINTED TO THE ROTTED CORPSE WITH THE TREE ROOTS TWINING AROUND IT AND THE TRUNK GROWING FROM ITS CHEST...

YOU DIDN'T NOTICE THAT THE PEACH PIT WAS MISSING, DID YOU, LANE? YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT SARAH HAD SWALLOWED IT AS YOU STRANGLER HER!

'YOU CALLED US THE NEXT DAY. YOU REPORTED THAT YOUR WIFE WAS MISSING, AND I CAME OVER...'

SOME OF HER CLOTHES ARE GONE, LIEUTENANT DOLAN. DO YOU THINK SHE'S LEFT ME?

DID YOU AND YOUR WIFE GET ALONG, MR. LANE? ANY ARGUMENTS?

WELL, YES, WE DID HAVE AN ARGUMENT LAST NIGHT. SHE ACCUSED ME OF MARRYING HER FOR HER MONEY!

I SEE. WELL, WE'LL TRY TO TRACE HER, MR. LANE. DON'T WORRY! I'M SURE SHE'S ALL RIGHT.

'THAT WAS WHEN I GOT SUSPICIOUS, LANE! WHEN A WIFE WALKS OUT ON HER HUSBAND, SHE'S USUALLY EASY TO TRACE. A TRAIN RESERVATION, A PLANE TICKET, SOMETHING...'

YOUR WIFE JUST SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED, MR. LANE.

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HER. I KNOW IT. OH, LORO... IF SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE...

'PEOPLE WHO PLAN ON SUICIDE DON'T PACK BAGS, LANE! I STARTED ASKING QUESTIONS. THE SERVANTS...'

YES. THEY ARGUED THAT NIGHT! SHE THREATENED TO LEAVE!

HE ADMITTED HE DIDN'T LOVE HER. THAT IT WAS HER MONEY...

I SEE! WELL... THANKS...

'REMEMBER HOW I CAME TO YOU...'

I THINK YOU MURDERED HER, LANE! IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO, I'LL PROVE IT.

YOU'RE CRAZY, DOLAN! I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY.

'YOU GOT A LITTLE WORRIED, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU DECIDED TO TAKE A LITTLE TRIP. WERE THINGS GETTING TOO HOT FOR YOU...?'

I JUST THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW. I HAVE TO GO TO EUROPE... ON BUSINESS. IF YOU FIND MY WIFE, GET IN TOUCH WITH ME, WON'T YOU?

SURE, MR. LANE! SURE!

"YOU STAYED AWAY, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU STAYED AWAY FOR SEVEN YEARS. YOU FIGURED YOU'D COME BACK AND YOUR WIFE WOULD BE LEGALLY DEAD AND HER FORTUNE WOULD BE YOURS. BUT I DIDN'T GIVE UP, LANE. I KEPT PLUGGING..."

MMMM. PERHAPS HE BURIED HER OUT HERE IN THE GARDEN. IT'S SO OVERGROWN NOW, I COULDN'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN. I'D HAVE TO DIG THE WHOLE PLACE UP!



"THE YEARS PASSED AND THE GREEN SHOOT BECAME A STALK..."



"...THEN A YOUNG TREE..."



"YOU LET YOUR COUNTRY PLACE GO TO RUIN! YOU DIDN'T WANT ANYBODY TENDING THE GARDEN, DIGGING AROUND. SO NO ONE NOTICED THE GREEN SHOOT POP THROUGH THE GROUND OVER SARAH'S GRAVE..."

I KNOW HE MURDERED HER! I KNOW IT! IF I COULD ONLY FIND OUT WHAT HE DID WITH HER BODY. IF I ONLY KNEW WHERE TO LOOK!



"...GROWING STRONGER WITH EACH PASSING SUMMER..."



"...UNTIL, LAST WEEK... IT BORE FRUIT... A PEACH..."



"I'D HEARD YOU WERE COMING HOME TO CLAIM SARAH'S FORTUNE. TODAY, WHEN YOU ARRIVED, I WAS WAITING..."

WELL! LIEUTENANT DOLAN. WELCOMING ME HOME I SEE! NEVER FOUND MY WIFE, EH? TOO BAD!

NO, LANE. YOU WERE TOO CLEVER. I STILL SAY YOU MURDERED HER, BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT.



"YOU WERE TRIUMPHANT, WEREN'T YOU, LANE? YOU INVITED ME IN. YOU GLOATED. AND THEN, YOU SPOTTED THE TREE..."

... YOU KNOW, DOLAN! SEVEN YEARS? HER FORTUNE IS MINE... WOW... I... I...

WHAT IS IT, LANE? WHAT DO YOU SEE?



"YOU TRIED TO COVER UP YOUR SHOCK AT SEEING THE PEACH TREE GROWING OUT OF SARAH'S GRAVE. YOU MADE A FEEBLE EXPLANATION..."

IT'S...IT'S JUST...THAT THE GARDEN IS SO NEGLECTED.

YES. IT IS A SHAME. IS THAT A YOUNG PEACH TREE, LANE?



"YOU WERE PRETTY GOOD AT COMPOSING YOURSELF, LANE. I LIKED THE WAY YOU STRODE OVER TO THE TREE...SMILING..."

WELL! SO IT IS! I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN I'D PLANTED IT! LOOK! IT'S BORNE FRUIT.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU LIKED PEACHES, LANE! I KNOW YOUR WIFE DID!



"...HOW HAPPILY YOU PLUCKED THE PEACH FROM ITS LIMB..."

ME? I LOVE PEACHES!

"...AND SANK YOUR TEETH INTO ITS PULPY SUCCULENT MEAT..."



"...AND HOW THE SICKLY RED LIQUID SPLATTERED OUT, OVER YOUR FACE, INTO YOUR MOUTH, GAGGING YOU WITH ITS SALTY RICHNESS, COVERING YOUR SHIRT WITH A CRIMSON SMEAR..."

GOOD LORD! CHOKE...

BLOOD!



THEY WERE LIFTING THE FOUL-SMELLING, DECAYED CORPSE AND CARRYING IT OFF. MICHAEL NETCHED, LOOKING DOWN AT HIS BLOOD-SOAKED SHIRT. LIEUTENANT DOLAN SMILED...

YES, LANE! IT WAS BLOOD. HUMAN BLOOD! SO I KNEW WHERE TO LOOK! I KNEW THEN WHERE SARAH WAS BURIED!

THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN...CHOKER



HEH, HEH. NOW WASN'T THAT A JUICY PEACH OF A YARN, KIDDIEST? OF COURSE IT WAS A BLOODY SHAME THAT MIKE PIT OFF MORE THAN HE COULD CHEW.

BY THE WAY! I'VE TAKEN SOME CUTTINGS FROM THE TREE GROWING FROM SARAH'S GUEST. I'M GOING INTO THE NURSERY BUSINESS, LANDSCAPING VAMPIRE GARDENS! NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE VAULT-KEEPER! 'BYE!





THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

President and CEO—Stephen A. Gappi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I do hope that when you come to reprint VAULT OF HORROR #32 (your #21) in a few month's time, you will use the uncensored cover, and not the [censored] version!

In case you still haven't received an answer I believe that the old movie about which you inquired in issue #18 may be the '54 Universal film NIGHT MONSTER, starring Ralph Morgan as a legless man who fashions temporary "artificial" limbs through the use of his psychic powers

Alysen Bills

Vancouver, WA

Heh, heh! You'll have to wait just 3 months to see the Uncensored version. Meantime, you've little doubt hit the nail on the head with NIGHT MONSTER. Thanks! The anonymous editor has decided to shoot for the moon and ask the readers...

[What's the title of the movie in which a bresh young newspaperman or policeman decides to impress the daughter of the mad scientist with his knowledge of radios by sitting in the scientist's homemade electric chair (or monster-making machine, or something) and trying to tune in a station? Only a surprise interruption saves him. Thanks in advance. -ED]

-VK

I am your biggest fan. Are you and The Crypt-Keeper friends (same for The Old Witch, too)? I didn't know you had comics until I read VAULT, now I'm your biggest fan.

Matt Williams, age 9

In VAULT #19 (#30) I can in the story "Practical Choke" recognize a youthful Bill Gaines posing as one of the medical students. I can gather that one of the others must be Al Feldsten, but who is the third? Does one of your obnoxious editors know, or does one of the readers?

Glaus Samonsen

Samsøe, DENMARK

My thinking is that you've pegged Gaines, but the tall one was surely Johnny Craig and the light haired one was maybe artist George Evans. Any votes to the contrary?

-VK

I can begin this letter only with the most outstanding THANK YOU! Having been an EC FanAddict for over 40 years, nothing could please me more than having these magnificent magazines back.

I first became acquainted with [them] back at the middle fifties, when, paradoxically, they were coming to a regretful end. VALOR and PIRACY were being published in their Spanish editions, and I'll never forget how I got hooked by those masterful illustrated tales of adventure in old ages and the sea. Some years later, in 1963, I wrote to a Mexican publisher about the horror magazines of his back in the '50s (translations of the MARVEL horror stuff, and others), and the man was kind enough to send me a

whole package of EC comics translated into Spanish. I can tell you how outraged I became when I learned, some time afterwards, all about the Code, and the rest of infamous deeds which sent the Golden Age, and EC at its midst, directly to hell.

The problem is I'm getting the magazines through somebody who charges me almost thrice the price (\$30 for each volume). Not being exactly a RICHIE RICH fellow, I'd like to find out if you could think of some way to get the volumes at a lower cost.

Carlos M. Federici

Montevideo, URUGUAY

Review our ads for back issues, our low cover price and reasonable shipping charges may save you money! -VK

I must say I enjoyed Craig's cover for VAULT 19. The juxtaposition of the severed arm hanging from the strap with an everyday scene of tired commuters only heightens the horror. Especially clever was the placement of the "Bi-Mo" ad, offering relief for upset stomachs, displayed prominently behind the row of nauseated passengers.

"Split Personality!" is as fine a piece of "hack-work" as I've ever seen!

It seemed blatantly obvious by page 2 an octopus was the culprit of "Who Doughnut?" But, it was great the way small clues were dropped throughout "guys like you are all arms!" the circles on the capitan's tie, giving the appearance of a tentacle, etc. I can't remember another story with so many innocent victims—the killer being an animal (I hesitate to say "dumb animal," how many octopi do you know of who've mastered the art of disguise?) seemingly doesn't violate EC's moral code of always punishing the guilty.

Barry McCollum

Altam, IL

I am writing to say how great the EC reprints are. My favorite story is "Strictly from Hunger" (VAULT #16). I was wondering if you will ever reprint all of the old issues of MAD?

Jimmy Lambert

Bridgewater, NJ

As noted in these pages before, the rights to MAD are a separate property from the other ECs, a separate deal would have to be struck.

-VK

VAULT #19 was a real treat. Since I had never read it before, it was like getting a new EC. Johnny Craig's handy cover really grabbed me.

All the stories are good, but my favorite is "Notes to You!" Ambrose Baldwin reminded me somewhat of Ambrose Bierce (also called "Bitter Bierce") who was something of a poison pen writer himself before vanishing forever at the end of 1913. Bierce served with distinction in the Civil War and wrote some great horror tales afterwards.

I especially enjoyed the choice of reading material displayed in Mr. Popkin's candy store (page 6, panel 2) - it shows he is a man of rare taste. Too bad such Mom and Pop-type stores seem to have gone the way of old Ambrose Bierce. Please print my address.

David C. Dalin

1204 N. 7th
Tacoma, WA 98403

Mom and Pop were replaced by Joe Fani

-VK

I was going through my basement and I found a original 50s EC horror comic. The cover was missing, and I wanted to know what number it was, it contained the story "Sink-Hole!" All the stories were cool.

And "witch" comic contain these stories "And All Through the House.", "Came the Dawn!", "Mournin' Mess" and "Split Personality!" Those were my favorite on HBO's "Tales from the Crypt" and I wanted to read them. Please print my address.

Jake Wagner

203 Carter RD
Paris, TX 78242

You found an old copy of VAULT 18 (our #7, available as a back issue). The stories you name are in: "House", VAULT 35 (in RCP VAULT 4, will be our #24); "Cama", SHOCK 9 (available); "Mournin'", CRYPT 38 (will be #22) and "Split", VAULT 30 (our #19, available). -VK

This is my first letter so please don't chop up this letter! I was wondering what RCP stands for (since I've been collecting for a while I probably should know what it stands for but I don't).

They should have given you the TV job instead of CK. I'm 11 years old and I would like a pen pal, please print my full address.

Ryan Higgins

5841 Abbott AV
Edina, MN 55410

RCP stands for RUSS COCHRAN PUBLISHER, and was office shorthand for the company Russ started with. We use it now to mean Russ' line of 64-page EC comics reprints, which are still available as back issues.

I won't chop your letter up, but here comes Ed with his hatchet. Watch out! -VK

In VAULT #16 you printed my letter where I requested that you reprint all of the EC horror stories from the Pre-Trend, CRIME, SHOCK, W FAN #2, etc., put into additional issues of the 3 horror comics.

I don't know what it was about those old horror comics, but they had a magic. And I'm sure that they have not turned any of us into ax-murderers. It may just be a gentle way of preparing us for real life. But let's continue the "real thing" for as long as possible. Your friend,

Rick Jaeger

Honolulu, HI

We reprinted all the inside front covers, house ads and letters pages and Johnson Smith ads in the hardback EC LIBRARY, my set will shortly be back in print! Write and request ordering info!

Nope, no ax murderers here, Ed the editor does have a little hatchet, though. -VK

After recently receiving ax of your annuals in the mail, I wanted to write to let you know how utterly delighted (and totally deranged) I was with them (CRYPT, VAULT, and

HAUNT, issues 1-5 and 6-10). These annuals are top quality and neatly bound, and I highly recommend them to your sinister subscribers.

In CRYPT #4, you responded to a letter regarding the classic horror flick, TALES FROM THE CRYPT (1972), with a brief synopsis about the origins of these tales in your comics. I was hoping that you might do the same for the equally gruesome VAULT OF HORROR (1973), reissued as TALES FROM THE CRYPT, PART II, another film adaptation of EC comics. One of my favorites, "Drawn And Quartered," a dastardly tale about an artist's voodoo revenge, first appeared in CRYPT 10. The other 4 tales portrayed bloodthirsty vampires ("Midnight Kiss"), a neat freak's frightful fate ("The Neat Job"), a macabre magician's trick ("This Trick'll Kill You"), and a treacherous tale of grisly graveyard retribution ("Bargain In Death").

Joe Grotenrath II

Alexandria, VA

Thanks for the rundown. Now, if Ed will just put that hatchet down... say, Joe, how would you suggest I handle this guy?



Good idea! I'll act on this suggestion immediately... chop-chop! -VK

Also available this month are WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED TALES. Watch for HAUNT, CRIME and FRONTLINE COMBAT next month. Don't forget CRYPT, WEIRD SCIENCE and PANIC! Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic).

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, sold out, FRONT #1-4, \$2 each; all others up to issue #2, \$1.50 each; CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-16, and VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, \$2 each. All others, \$2.50 each (latest issues: CRYPT, W SCI, VAULT, W FAN and 2FIST are up to 20; HAUNT & CRIME are up to 15; FRONT to 5 and PANIC to 2).

Don't forget the entire 11-issue run of WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-15, \$2 each) and the 18 issues of SHOCK SUSPENSIONSTORIES (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-15, \$2.00 each; #16-18, \$2.50 each).

Add \$5 per order (\$10 outside US) for S&H.

We want letters! Write to:
VAULT
GEMSTONE
POB 469
WEST PLAINS, MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS

VAULT OF HORROR #31* (#20, JUN/JUL 1983)

COVER by Johnny Craig

"Easel Kill Ya"

Johnny Craig

"Peach of a Plot!"

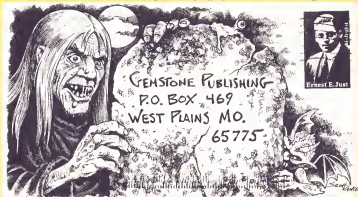
Jack Davis

"The Lake"

art by Joe Orlando

"One Good Turn..."

Graham Ingels



Above, witness the envelope sent by Scott Vane, 5 ST Paul, MN; he drew the entire thing. (Minus the stamp. Or, did he draw the stamp, too? Naughty, naughty!) The post person gave us a good looking-over upon delivery. That's okay, though. And, we'll leave a little something in his sock this Christmas—his foot! Heh, heh! Our stamp of approval goes on this and all submissions to **THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF...**

FINE ARTS #54

The esoteric essays of Richard Jaeger, Honolulu, HI, are little works of literary art, so I'm running his latest here in my "Fine Arts" page.

MONEY OR MYSTERY?

Mystery is a deep thing. Very deep. It is a distinct flavor in your life. It is sipping through wonder-filled eyes. But you must choose between money and mystery. You cannot have both.

You may have the entire set of the original ECs, all in pristine mint condition. They are all in acid-free holders. You never remove them. Fingerprints would lower their value.

You may be able to get a million dollars for them now. When you're 80 you may get a billion. And you'll have missed it all.

You'll have missed the spirit of EC. You'll have chosen the money world over the magic world. Let's say that you are old enough to have bought the original **HAUNT** #1 in 1950. If you take the pristine mint copy that you now have out of its plastic holder, you can hold it in your hands as you did in 1950.

You will be back in 1950 again, when you were a wonder-filled child. You can gently touch the cover. You will notice that wonderful smell that came out of that giant box of

comic books that your friend up the block had. And if you get a little bit of water on it and it starts to shrivel up, then it will begin to look like the ECs that I had as a kid. The three hosts called them rags, but these rags were the world to me.

Later you can put the comic back in the plastic envelope. All through the next weary day at work you can dream about that special time later at night when the ECs will once more leave their holders and actually be in your hands again. You will be in that dream-state once more, and it will be so good for your health.

The eight-year-olds of today are now buying Russ' reprints. 40 years from now these will be their "real-thing" to them incomparably more valuable than the originals of the 50s.

Richard Jaeger

Honolulu, HI

Substitute the phrase **CRYPT OF TERROR** #1 in the above and you've got a sentiment both true and beautiful. (But, what did make your friend smell like a giant box of comics? Eau de Libre Comique?) —CK



Send your contri-bu-tions (not return-able, not too long, not too big, legi-tle double-spaced text &/or bold black art. Warn-ing...we edit) to:

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF FINE ARTS

GEMSTONE

POB 469

WEST PLAINS MO 65775

We welcome contributions. We cannot promise to return, acknowledge or publish contributions. We edit for clarity, accuracy and size. We automatically edit all direct address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them not changed. We attempt to acknowledge contributors, to do so we need a copy of address on the individual contribution.

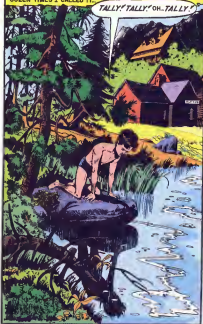
HERE IS MY ADAPTATION OF
RAY BRADBURY'S...

The Lake



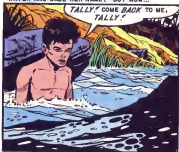
IT WAS SEPTEMBER... IN THE LAST DAYS WHEN THINGS ARE GETTING BAD FOR NO REASON. THE BEACH WAS LONG AND LONELY. ALL OF THE HOT OGG STAKES WERE BOARDED UP WITH STRIPS OF GOLDEN PLANKING, SEALING IN THE MUSTARD, ONION, MEAT ODORS OF THE LONG, JOYFUL SUMMER. IT WAS LIKE NAILING SUMMER INTO A SERIES OF COFFINS. THE WIND HAD COME AND TOUCHED THE SAND, BLOWING AWAY ALL OF THE MILLION FOOTPRINTS OF JULY AND AUGUST. I WAS ALONE. I CALLED HER NAME. A DOZEN TIMES I CALLED IT.

TALLY! TALLY! OH... TALLY!

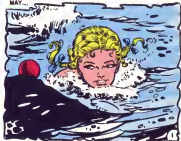


EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN SCHOOL. I WAS NOT. TOMORROW, I WOULD BE ON MY WAY WEST ON A TRAIN. I HAD COME TO THE BEACH FOR ONE LAST BRIEF MOMENT. I WENT DOWN TO THE WATER AND LET IT COOL UP TO MY STOMACH. ALWAYS BEFORE, WITH THE CROWD, I HADN'T CARED TO LOOK, TO COME TO THIS SPOT AND SEARCH AROUND IN THE WATER AND CALL HER NAME. BUT NOW...

TALLY! COME BACK TO ME, TALLY!



FUNNY, BUT YOU REALLY EXPECT ANSWERS TO YOUR CALLING WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG. YOU FEEL THAT WHATEVER YOU MAY THINK CAN BE REAL. AND SOMETIMES, THAT IS NOT SO WRONG. I THOUGHT OF TALLY, SWIMMING OUT INTO THE WATER... LAST MAY...



TALLY, WITH HER PISTAILS TRAILING, BLONDE, SHE WAS LAUGHING, AND THE SUN WAS ON HER SMALL TWELVE YEAR OLD SHOULDERS...



I THOUGHT OF THE WATER SETTLING QUIET...



...OF THE LIFEGUARD LEAPING INTO IT... OF TALLY'S MOTHER SCREAMING... *MY BABY!*



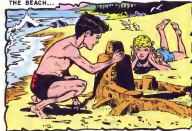
TALLY NEVER CAME OUT. THE LIFEGUARD TRIED TO PERSUADE HER TO COME OUT, BUT SHE DID NOT. HE CAME BACK WITH ONLY BITS OF WATER-WEED IN HIS BIG-KNUCKLED FINGERS...



TALLY WAS GONE. SHE WOULD NOT SIT ACROSS FROM ME AT SCHOOL ANY LONGER, OR CHASE INDOOR BALLS ON THE BRICK STREETS ON SUMMER NIGHTS. SHE HAD GONE OUT TOO FAR AND THE LAKE WOULD NOT LET HER RETURN. AND NOW IN THE LONELY AUTUMN WHEN THE SKY WAS HUGE AND THE WATER WAS HUGE AND THE BEACH WAS SO VERY LONG, I HAD COME DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, ALONE...



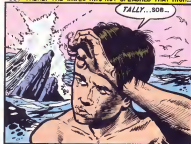
I WAS ONLY TWELVE. BUT I KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVED HER. IT WAS THAT LOVE THAT COMES BEFORE ALL SIGNIFICANCE OF BODY AND MORALS. IT WAS A LOVE THAT WAS MADE OF WARM LONG DAYS TOGETHER AT THE BEACH...



IT WAS MADE OF THE HUMMING QUIET DAYS OF DRONING EDUCATION AT THE SCHOOL, AND ALL THE LONG AUTUMN DAYS OF THE YEARS PAST WHEN I HAD CARRIED HER BOOKS HOME FROM SCHOOL...



I CALLED HER NAME FOR THE LAST TIME. I SHIVERED I FELT WATER ON MY FACE AND DID NOT KNOW HOW IT GOT THERE. THE WAVES HAD NOT SPLASHED THAT HIGH...



BUT THIS TIME, I ONLY BUILT HALF A SAND CASTLE. THEN I GOT UP...



AFTER A WHILE, THE WATER CAME IN...



TURNING, I RETREATED TO THE SAND AND STOOD THERE FOR HALF AN HOUR, HOPING FOR ONE GLIMPSE, ONE SIGN, ONE LITTLE BIT OF TALLY TO REMEMBER. THEN, I KNELT AND BUILT A SAND CASTLE, SHAPING IT FINE, BUILDING IT AS TALLY AND I HAD OFTEN BUILT SO MANY OF THEM...



...BLENDING THE SAND-CASTLE, MASHING IT DOWN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, INTO THE ORIGINAL SMOOTHNESS...



SILENTLY I WALKED ALONG THE SHORE. FAR AWAY, A MERRY-GO-ROUND JANGLED FAINTLY... BUT IT WAS ONLY THE WIND...



THE NEXT DAY I WENT AWAY ON THE TRAIN. A TRAIN HAS POOR MEMORY. IT SOON PUTS ALL BEHIND IT. IT FORGETS THE CORN FIELDS AND RIVERS OF CHILDHOOD, THE BRIDGES, THE LAKES, THE VALLEYS, THE COTTAGES, THE HURTS AND THE JOYS. IT SPREADS THEM OUT BEHIND AND THEY DROP BACK OF THE HORIZON...



I LENGTHENED MY BONES, PUT FLESH ON THEM, CHANGED MY YOUNG MIND FOR AN OLDER ONE, THREW AWAY CLOTHES AS THEY NO LONGER FITTED, SHIFTED FROM GRAMMAR TO HIGH SCHOOL, TO COLLEGE BOOKS, TO LAW BOOKS...



AND THEN THERE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN...MARGARET...
IN SACRAMENTO. I KNEW HER FOR A TIME, AND
WE WERE MARRIED...



LAKE BLUFF, POPULATION 10,000, CAME UP OVER THE
SKY. MARGARET LOOKED SO HANDSOME IN HER FINE
NEW CLOTHES. SHE WATCHED ME AS I FELT MY OLD
WORLD GATHER ME BACK INTO ITS LIVING. SHE HELD
MY ARM AS THE TRAIN SLID INTO BLUFF STATION, AND
OUR BAGGAGE WAS ESCORTED OUT...



I HAD THAT FEELING AGAIN OF
WANTING TO BE ALONE, BUT I
COULD NOT FORCE MYSELF TO
SPEAK OF THIS TO MARGARET...



IT WAS LATE IN THE DAY. THE
BEACH WAS ALMOST DESERTED.
THE LIFEGUARD BOAT PULLED UP
ON THE SHORE. THE LIFEGUARD
STEPPED OUT OF IT, SLOWLY, WITH
SOMETHING IN HIS ARMS...



AND WE CAME BACK...BACK TO LAKE BLUFF...FOR OUR HONEY
MOON. LIKE A MEMORY, A TRAIN WORKS BOTH WAYS. A
TRAIN CAN BRING RUSHING BACK ALL THOSE THINGS YOU
LEFT BEHIND SO MANY YEARS BEFORE...



WE STAYED ON TWO WEEKS IN ALL, REVISITING ALL THE
PLACES TOGETHER. THE DAYS WERE HAPPY. I THOUGHT
I LOVED MARGARET WELL. AT LEAST I THOUGHT I DID.
IT WAS ON ONE OF THE LAST DAYS THAT WE WALKED
DOWN BY THE SHORE...



I FROZE THERE. I HELD MY BREATH
AND I FELT SMALL... ONLY TWELVE
YEARS OLD, VERY LITTLE, VERY INFIN-
ITESIMAL AND AFRAID...



THE WIND HOWLED. I COULD NOT SEE MARGARET. I COULD SEE ONLY THE BEACH, THE LIFEGUARD SLOWLY EMERGING FROM THE BOAT WITH A GREY SACK IN HIS HANDS, NOT VERY HEAVY, AND HIS FACE ALMOST AS GREY AND LINED...



I WALKED SLOWLY DOWN THE SAND TO WHERE THE LIFEGUARD STOOD. HE LOOKED AT ME...



THE LIFEGUARD KEPT LOOKING AT ME FOR A LONG TIME AND HE COULDN'T SPEAK. HE PUT THE GREY SACK DOWN ON THE SAND, AND THE WATER WHISPERED WET UP AROUND IT AND WENT BACK...



I WAITED...



HE NOODED...

TEN YEARS, I'D SAY. THERE HAVEN'T BEEN ANY CHILDREN DROWNED HERE THIS YEAR. THERE WERE TWELVE CHILDREN DROWNED HERE SINCE 1942, BUT WE RECOVERED ALL OF THEM BEFORE A FEW HOURS HAD PASSED. ALL EXCEPT ONE, I REMEMBER. THIS BODY HERE, WHY IT MUST BE TEN YEARS IN THE WATER...



I STARED AT THE SACK. THE WIND WAS LOUD...



HURRY, MAN! OPEN IT!

I BETTER NOT. IT'S... IT'S NOT VERY PLEASANT...



THEN, PERHAPS HE SAW THE WAY MY FACE MUST HAVE LOOKED. HE FUMBLING WITH THE SACK, OPENING IT ONLY PART WAY. IT WAS ENOUGH. THERE WAS ONLY THE SKY AND THE WIND AND THE WATER AND AUTUMN COMING ON LONELY. I LOOKED DOWN AT HER THERE...



I THOUGHT...

PEOPLE GROW. I HAVE GROWN. BUT SHE HAS NOT CHANGED. SHE IS STILL SMALL. DEATH DOES NOT PERMIT GROWTH OR CHANGE. SHE STILL HAS GOLDEN HAIR. SHE WILL BE FOREVER YOUNG AND I WILL LOVE HER FOREVER, OH GOD, I WILL LOVE HER FOREVER.



AND THEN... I KNEW

I'LL... HELP YOU FINISH IT, TALLY...



IT'S A LONG LONG TIME FOR HER, AIN'T IT?

YES... IT IS. OH GOD, YES IT IS!



THE LIFEGUARD TIED UP THE SACK. I WALKED BY MYSELF, DOWN THE BEACH, DOWN TOWARD WHERE HE'D FOUND HER. THERE, AT THE WATER'S EDGE, LAY A SAND CASTLE, ONLY HALF-BUILT...



JUST LIKE TALLY AND I USED TO BUILD THEM. SHE HALF.. AND I HALF. I LOOKED AT IT. I KNELT BESIDE IT AND I SAW THE LITTLE PRINTS OF FEET COMING IN FROM THE LAKE AND GOING BACK OUT TO THE LAKE AGAIN AND NOT EVER RETURNING...



I DID. I BUILT THE REST OF IT UP VERY SLOWLY, THEN AROSE...



... AND TURNED AWAY AND WALKED OFF, SO AS NOT TO WATCH IT CRUMBLE IN THE WAVES THE WAY ALL THINGS CRUMBLE. I WALKED BACK UP THE BEACH TO WHERE A STRANGE WOMAN NAMED MARGARET WAITED FOR ME, SMILING...



THE END

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

NEE, NEE! AND NOW IT'S WIND-UP TIME IN K.K.'S MAG, AND SO AS NOT TO DISAPPOINT ANY OF YOU HUNGRY GHOULS WHO STILL HAVEN'T SATISFIED YOUR APPETITE FOR HORROR, YOUR NOSTESS IN THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE OLD WITCH, WILL NOW SLING SLIME. THIS DISGUSTING DELVING INTO DELIRIUM IS A FAVORITE CAULDRON CONCOCTION OF MINE, GUARANTEED TO KILL ANY GRAVINGS YOU MIGHT HAVE. I CALL THIS PUTRID PORTION OF PROSE...

ONE GOOD TURN...

THE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAD BEEN WONDERFUL MONTHS FOR JENNIFER. THINGS HAD CHANGED. EAGERLY SHE WOULD RUSH HOME EACH NIGHT TO TELL EDWIN, HER HUSBAND, OF HER LATEST EXPLOIT. AND EDWIN WOULD LIE THERE, LISTENING TO JENNIFER, WHILE SHE DESCRIBED HER RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENT. POOR DEAR EDWIN BEDRIDDEN EDWIN. PARALYZED FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS. YES, THINGS HAD CHANGED FOR EDWIN AND JENNIFER. THINGS WERE DIFFERENT NOW...

IT'S JENNIFER, EDWIN,
DEAR! I'M HOME!

JENNIFER STOOD IN THE HALL, SNIVERING FROM THE BLEAK WINTER COLD THAT GRIPPED THE OUTSIDE WORLD IN ITS ICY FIST. CAREFULLY, SHE REMOVED HER THREAD-BARE COAT AND HUNG IT IN THE CLOSET...

OH, I'VE HAD SUCH A WONDERFUL DAY,
EDWIN, DEAR. WAIT TILL I TELL YOU!

JENNIFER TODDLED DOWN THE HALL TO THE BEDROOM DOOR. SHE OPENED IT A CRACK AND PEERED IN. EDWIN LAY, SILENT, IN THE HUGE ANTIQUE DOUBLE BED...



JUST LET ME FIX MYSELF SOME *TEA*, MY DARLING. THEN I'LL COME TO BED AND TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT.

THE TEAPOT STOOD IN ITS USUAL PLACE ON THE OLD STOVE. JENNIFER LIT THE GAS AND PUT OUT A CUP AND SAUCER, HUMMING SOFTLY. SHE RAISED HER VOICE SO EDWIN COULD HEAR HER...



MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY CAN GIVE ONE SUCH A FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND SATISFACTION, EDWIN.

SHE SAT DEMURELY AT THE SPOTLESS TABLE, SIPPING THE WARM BREW...



OH, EDWIN. I'M SO *GLAD* I FOUND THAT PEOPLE *NEED* ME. IT'S SO *NICE* TO KNOW YOU'RE *NEEDED*. IT'S SO *NICE* TO KNOW YOU CAN *DO THINGS* FOR PEOPLE.

JENNY DRAINED THE TEACUP DRY AND WASHED IT IN THE SINK AND PUT IT AWAY. THEN SHE REFILLED THE POT AND PUT IT BACK ON THE STOVE...



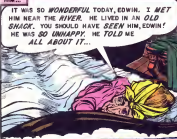
I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A *MINUTE*, DARLING. SOON AS I *WASH UP* AND GET INTO MY *BOWN*...

THE WATER SPLASHED LOUDLY IN THE SINK. JENNY BANG SOFTLY AS SHE WASHED AND WIPED AND COMBED AND CREAMED AND DID ALL THE THINGS THAT WOMEN DO IN PREPARATION FOR BED...



THERE. *NOW* I'M READY. I WASN'T *TOO LONG*, WAS I, EDWIN? I *HURRIED* AS FAST AS I *COULD*. DEAR EDWIN. IS IT *AWFUL* BEING LEFT ALONE ALL DAY?

SHE WAS BESIDE HIM NOW, BETWEEN COOL SHEETS, SNUGLING UP TO HIM, STROKING HIS HAIR, KISSING HIM...



IT WAS SO *WONDERFUL* TODAY, EDWIN. I *MET* HIM NEAR THE *RIVER*. HE LIVED IN AN *OLD SHACK*. YOU SHOULD HAVE *SEEN* HIM, EDWIN! HE WAS SO *UNHAPPY*. HE TOLD ME *ALL ABOUT IT*...

'HIS NAME WAS *BERTRUM*. I CALLED HIM *BERT*. HE TOLD ME HOW, ONCE UPON A TIME, WE'D BEEN *RICH...VERY RICH*.'



BUT THEN I *LOST* IT ALL, JENNY! THE *CRASH*, YOU KNOW. AND I *LOST* MY *FRIENDS*, TOO. AND MY *WIFE*. AND I WAS *TOO OLD* TO START *ALL OVER* AGAIN...

POOR *BERT*. YOU MUST BE *VERY UNHAPPY*!



OH, I WAS, JENNY!
I WAS VERY UNHAPPY!

I'D LIKE TO
MAKE YOU HAPPY
AGAIN, BERT.



OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT,
JENNY! IT WAS A LONG
TIME AGO. I'VE GOTTEN
OVER IT AND... JENNY!
WHAT... WHAT ARE
YOU DOING WITH
THAT KNIFE...?

I'M GOING
TO MAKE
YOU HAPPY
AGAIN, BERT!



NO! NO, JENNY! MY
GOD! I AM HAPPY,
NOW! I'VE GOTTEN
USED TO THIS! I...
I... JENNY!
KEEP AWAY...

IT'LL BE SO
NICE, BERT.
YOU WON'T
BE SAD
ANYMORE...

JENNY SIGHEO AND SMILED. HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE STROKED EDWIN'S CHEEK...



SO I STABBED HIM, MY DARLING!
OH, EDWIN! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN
HIS FACE. SO CALM. SO SERENE.
HE LAY THERE ON THE FLOOR WITH
THAT KNIFE IN HIS CHEST... SMILING!

'I MADE SOMEONE HAPPY TODAY, EDWIN. ARE YOU PROUD OF ME? REMEMBER GRACE? GRACE WAS HER NAME, WASN'T IT? SHE WAS CRYING WHEN I MET HER. I TOLD YOU ABOUT GRACE, EDWIN. REMEMBER?..'



SOMETHING WRONG,
MY DEAR? CAN I
HELP YOU?

SOB...SOB...
LEAVE ME
ALONE! PLEASE!
GO AWAY!



COME, MY DEAR. LET'S
TAKE A WALK! YOU'LL
TELL ME ALL ABOUT IT!

REALLY...SOB. ALL I
WANT IS TO BE LEFT
ALONE...SOB...



AND THAT'S THE STORY, JENNY!
HE WALKED OUT ON ME. LEFT
ME FLAT, WITHOUT A DIME.
AND I TRUSTED HIM...
BELIEVED IN HIM.

YOU POOR, DEAR
GIRL! HE'S MADE
YOU SO WRETCHED.
I WANT TO DO SOMETHING
FOR YOU.



WHAT CAN YOU DO, JENNY? IT'S MY PROBLEM, I'LL JUST HAVE TO GET OVER... JENNY! MY GOD!

THIS IS WHAT I CAN DO, GRACE... I CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN...

'THE ROCK LYING ON THE DESERTED PATH IN THE PARK MADE EVERYTHING SO EASY, I BROUGHT IT DOWN ON GRACE'S SKULL AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL SHE SMILED AS THE BLOOD BURGLED FROM HER LIPS...'

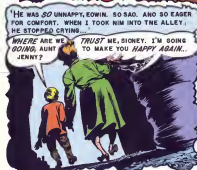
NOW... GRACE... NOW YOU'RE HAPPY!



'AND SIOENEY. POOR SIOENEY. REMEMBER ME TELLING YOU ABOUT SIOENEY, EDWIN? POOR BOY. HE WAS SEVEN AT THE MOST, CRYING HIS EYES OUT, POOR LITTLE TYKE...'

WHAT IS IT, CHIL? ARE YOU LOST? WHAT'S THE MATTER, LITTLE ONE?

I... SOB... I RAN AWAY FROM HOME. AN' NOW... SOB... NOW I'M LAWST...



'HE WAS SO UNHAPPY, EDWIN. SO SAD. AND SO EAGER FOR COMFORT. WHEN I TOOK HIM INTO THE ALLEY, HE STOPPED CRYING...'

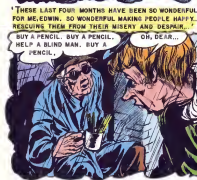
WHERE ARE WE GOING, AUNT JENNY?

TRUST ME, SIOENEY. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN...



'HE LOOKED SO SWEET AS I CLOSED MY FINGERS AROUND HIS SMALL WHITE THROAT, EDWIN. SO AT PEACE WITH THE WORLD AS HE SLIPPED FROM MY GRASP AND FELL TO THE ALLEY PAVEMENT DEAD...'

THERE, MY CHILD. THERE. NOW YOU WON'T EVER DRY AGAIN!



'THESE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAVE BEEN SO WONDERFUL FOR ME, EDWIN. SO WONDERFUL MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY... RESCUING THEM FROM THEIR MISERY AND DESPAIR...'

BUY A PENCIL. BUY A PENCIL. HELP A BLIND MAN. BUY A PENCIL.

OH, DEAR...



'CAN ANYONE BE MORE WRETCHED... MORE SAD THAN A BLIND MAN, EDWIN? I HAD TO HELP HIM. I HAD TO...'

ALL OF THEM? OH, BLESS YOU, LADY! BLESS YOU!

NOW YOU CAN STOP FOR THE DAY, YOU POOR DEAR. COME, GIVE ME YOUR HAND...

'ONE MINUTE, SAGNESS AND MISERY. THE NEXT MINUTE, PEACE AND CONTENTMENT. SO EASY TO LEAD HIM TO THE STREET...TO GUIDE HIM OFF THE CURB...INTO THE PATH OF THE TRUCK...'

I'LL TAKE YOU HOME.

TH-THANK YOU, LADY!
YOU'RE SO...KIND...

'THE SQUEALING BRAKES. LIKE PEALS OF LAUGHTER. THE ONLY THING I REGRET WAS NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE HIM HAPPY AT LAST...HAVING TO LEAVE THE SCENE...'

ANOTHER SOUL, LIFTED FROM THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR TO THE GLORIOUS JOY OF DEATH...

GOOD LORD! WHAT HAPPENED?

'HOW CAN PEOPLE GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT A MISSION, EDWIN? I USED TO THINK MY MISSION WAS CARING FOR YOU... MAKING YOU COMFORTABLE AFTER YOU BECAME PARALYZED...'

OH, EDWIN! YOU'RE IN PAIN! I CAN TELL! YOUR EYES...

'BUT THAT WAS BEFORE I FOUND MY REAL PURPOSE IN LIFE. THAT WAS BEFORE THE OLD WOMAN ON THE PIER...'

I SIT HERE, DAY AFTER DAY, AND I WAIT. I KNOW HE'LL NEVER COME HOME TO ME BUT I WAIT ANYWAY...

YOU POOR THING...

'REMEMBER HER, EDWIN? SHE WORE A GOLD STAR. SHE WAS SO SAD...'

HE WAS A WONDERFUL BOY, JENNY. A GOOD BOY... WITH HIS WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HIM. HE...

DON'T BE UNHAPPY, THELMA. I HATE TO SEE PEOPLE UNHAPPY...

'HOW SHE FLOUNDERED IN THE WATER. HOW SHE SCREAMED. AND HOW SERENE AND CONTENT SHE LOOKED AS SHE WENT DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, THE MURKY RIVER POURING INTO HER LUNGS THROUGH HER SMILING LIPS...'

'FOUR MONTHS IT'S BEEN, EDWIN. FOUR MONTHS SINCE I DISCOVERED MY MISSION IN LIFE. REMEMBER THE DAY? IT WAS SUNOXY. YOU LAY IN YOUR BED, STARING OUT AT THE SNOW FALLING ON THE BARE DEAD TREE OUTSIDE OUR BEDROOM WINDOW...'

WHAT IS IT, EDWIN? YOU LOOK SO SAD TODAY. WHY... YOU'RE CRYING...

'I COULD SEE THE TEARS FILLING YOUR STARRING EYES. I COULD SEE ALL THE SADNESS AND DESPAIR OVERFLOWING YOUR EYELIDS AND TRICKLING DOWN YOUR CHEEKS...'

DON'T CRY, EDWIN! DON'T BE SAD. I CAN'T STAND TO SEE YOU UNHAPPY.

I KNOW WHAT, EDWIN. I KNOW WHAT! I'LL MAKE YOU YOUR FAVORITE DRINK. I'LL MAKE YOU A HOT CHOCOLATE. WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE...?

'AND SUDDENLY, ON THAT DAY FOUR MONTHS AGO, I KNEW. I KNEW HOW TO MAKE YOU HAPPY. SO I WENT INTO THE KITCHEN AND I MADE YOU YOUR FAVORITE. HOT CHOCOLATE...'

I'LL BE FINISHED SOON, EDWIN...

JENNY LAY BESIDE EDWIN IN THE HUGE ANTIQUE BED. SHE WHISPERED SOFTLY, STROKING HIS CHEEK...

AND WHEN I'D FINISHED MAKING YOUR DRINK, I PUT THE...THE...OH, DEAR! WHO CAN THAT BE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?

OPEN UP IN THERE!

THE HEAVY FOUNDINGS ON THE FRONT DOOR ECHOED THROUGH THE HOUSE. JENNY KISSED EDWIN AND SLID OUT OF BED...

I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, EDWIN. I'LL SEE WHO IT IS AND BE RIGHT BACK...

THERE WERE TWO OF THEM...SOMBER-FACED MEN PEERING OUT OF THE DARKNESS AT HER...

MIND IF WE CAME IN, MA'AM?

WE'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU.

JENNY LOOKED AT THE SHINY BADGE THAT ONE OF THEM HELD OUT TO HER. SHE GLANCED OVER HER SHOULDER DOWN THE HALL...

WELL...ALL RIGHT. YOU CAN COME IN FOR A MINUTE, BUT PLEASE... KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN. MY HUSBAND'S IN THE BEDROOM...

WE JUST WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS.

JENNY CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND THEM. THEY LOOKED AROUND. ONE OF THEM GRIMACED...



THE TALLER ONE STARTED DOWN THE HALL... TOWARD THE BEDROOM...



THE ONE NAMED PHIL TURNED INTO THE BEDROOM. JENNY SCREAMED...



PHIL CAME OUT AGAIN, HIS HAND CLAMPED TO HIS MOUTH. JENNY BEGAN TO SOB...



THE ONE NAMED STEVE PUSHED JENNY TO THE BEDROOM. HE STARED IN JENNY GRINNED...



EDWIN LAY ON THE HUGE ANTIQUE BED. THE FLESH OF HIS FACE WAS BEGINNING TO FALL AWAY REVEALING WHITENED GRINNING TEETH. WHAT THE DETECTIVES HAD NOTICED WAS THE FOUL ODOR OF DECAY THAT SPRUNG FROM HIS LONG-DEAD BODY...

I MADE HIM HAPPY FOUR MONTHS AGO WHEN I PUT CYANIDE IN HIS HOT CHOCOLATE!



HEE, HEE! THAT'S IT, CREEPS. THAT'S MY FOUL FARE FOR THIS ISSUE. THEY TOOK POOR JENNY AWAY AND PUT HER IN A PADDED CELL WHERE SHE CAN'T MAKE ANYBODY HAPPY ANYMORE. BUT SHE TRIES. THE KEEPERS HAVE A DEVIL OF A TIME WITH HER. AND NOW IT'S TIME TO PUT OUT THE FIRE BENEATH MY CAULDRON AND CLOSE THE VAULT-KEEPER'S MAGIC FOR THIS ISSUE. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, THE NAUGHT OF FEAR. BYE, NOW!



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NO. 31

JUNE - JULY



THE VAULT OF



10¢

HORROR

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



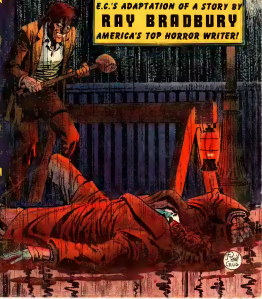
THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH

IN THIS ISSUE:

E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY
RAY BRADBURY
AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!



RAY BRADBURY



Ray Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Ill., on Aug. 22, 1920. His mother was of Swedish descent, and his father's ancestors came to America in 1630. Ray spent much of his childhood in Arizona. At the age of 12, he received his first typewriter, a toy model, and started to write sequels to Edgar Rice Burroughs novels. As a boy, his greatest interests were magic, acting, and reading the Oz books, Tom Swift, Edgar Allan Poe, and Jules Verne. So it was quite natural, when he began writing, that his first stories were fantasies. He took a short-story course in Los Angeles High School in 1937, graduated in 1938, and had no further formal education. He started submitting stories to magazines at the age of 15, and sold his first story at the age of 21. His early acceptances appeared in the leading pulp magazines. Then in 1943, he sold his first "quality" story to the American Mercury, and followed this with sales to most of America's best-known slick magazines. His stories have been reprinted in some 60 anthologies, including the 1946, 1948, and 1952 volumes of The Best American Short Stories. In 1948, Ray won third prize in the O. Henry Memorial Prize Stories Awards. The only other job Bradbury has ever held outside of writing was during the three years from 1939 to 1942, when he sold newspapers on a street corner at night, while writing during the day. He has had three books of stories published: DARK CARNIVAL, from Arkham House in 1947; THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, from Doubleday in 1950, and THE ILLUSTRATED MAN, Doubleday, 1951. His new book of stories, THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE SUN, is due, again from Doubleday, about the time this blog hits the stands. Ray has just finished writing a science-fiction movie script for a big Hollywood film studio, and has started another. He now lives in Los Angeles with his wife Margaret, whom he married in 1947, and his two daughters . . . Susan, age three, and Ramona, eighteen months. Having been a fervent collector of comic strips and panels since the age of eight (owning a complete file of Buck Rogers strips from 1928 through 1937, Flash Gordon from 1934 through 1938, Prince Valiant from 1937 through the present, and Tarzan (drawn by Hal Foster) from 1932 through 1936, plus hundreds of old Popeyes, Our Our Ways, Alley Oops, etc.), Ray was most enthusiastic when we suggested adapting some of his stories into the comic format. His reaction to the job E.C. is doing can best be summed up in his own words: "... My thanks and gratitude for the really fine adaptations and beautiful art work you are doing on my stories. This is an entirely new experience to me, and I cannot tell you enough how much I appreciate the painstaking detail and thought you are putting into your efforts. It seems to me that again and again you achieve the exactly right atmosphere and angle in carrying out the story. . . . You people have a way of continually making me happy. I can't thank you enough!"

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THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEY, HEY! THANKS, YOU'RE ON TIME. I HAVE BEEN EAGERLY AWAITING YOUR ARRIVAL. FOR AFTER MUCH SCOURING AROUND IN THE DEEPEST RECESSES OF THE VAULT, I DISCOVERED AN ANCIENT AND CRUMBLY VOLUME WHICH CONTAINED A CLASSIC TALE. I'M CERTAIN YOU WILL ENJOY THIS ONE, SO SETTLE YOUR SKELETON AND PREPARE FOR A TRULY MORBID AND IRONIC STORY ENTITLED...

EASEL KILL YA!



THE MISERABLE WRETCH WANDERED AIMLESSLY THROUGH SILENT, FOGGY STREETS. HISsing RAIN-DROPS FELLED HIS UNCOVERED HEAD, RAN DOWN HIS FACE, MINGLING WITH TEARS. TOWERING STREET LAMPS FORMED HIS SHADOW INTO GROTESQUE SHAPES ON SOLEMN BUILDINGS, PAINLESSLY ELONGATED IT TO EXPLORE ALONG THE WET, SHIMMERING PAVEMENT INTO THE DARKNESS...

RAINWATER SURGLED ANGRILY IN THE GUTTER, REACHED OUT, CAUGHT, AND CARRIED EVERYTHING IT COULD WITH IT INTO THE SEWER DEPTHS. THE MISERABLE WRETCH SHUFFLED ON, AND ONCE, AN ANGUISHED SOB EMANATED FROM HIS LIPS TO BE SNATCHED AWAY BY THE WIND...



HIS FOOTSTEPS CARRIED HIM OUT ON THE BRIDGE. HE GRIPPED THE RAIL WITH TREMLING, WHITED FINGERS, STARED UNSEEING INTO THE BLACKNESS AT THE WATER HE KNEW WAS SOMEWHERE BELOW, AND LISTENED TO THE VICIOUS WHISPERINGS OF THE RAIL.



HE STOOD THERE FOR LONG MINUTES, THINKING A MILLION THOUGHTS, SEEING A MILLION VISIONS, RECALLING A MILLION MEMORIES...



...BUT I'M ONLY TWENTY-NINE! MOST PEOPLE ARE JUST BEGINNING TO LIVE AT TWENTY-NINE! WHY AM I TRYING TO END IT? SUICIDE IS *THAT* THE REAL SOLUTION? WHY HAVE THEY DRIVEN ME TO THIS?

A SPARKLING BUBBLE OF FEMALE LAUGHTER IN A PASSING TAXI, GONE IN AN INSTANT. HE WHINED AT THE SOUND...



GO AHEAD! LAUGH AT ME! EVERYONE LAUGHS AT ME! (WHY?) WHY CAN'T SOMEONE UNDERSTAND HOW I FEEL?

HE STUMBLED INTO THE ROADWAY ON WATERY LEGS...



I'M AN ARTIST! I PAINT PICTURES! WHY DO YOU ALL HATE ME? (WHY?) WHY CAN'T YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE? (WHY?) (WHY?) WHY?

HE CRUMPLED TO HIS KNEES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD, FIST RAGED SHAKILY IN DISPLEASURE...



I HATE YOU! I WANT YOU TO SUFFER AS I HAVE! I WANT YOU TO FEEL THE PAIN I'VE FELT (WHY?) I WANT YOU TO KNOW THE HUNGER... THE LONELINESS!

HE WAS ONLY DIMLY AWARE OF THE MOTOR'S ROAR BEHIND HIM, ONLY HALF-HEARD THE COMPLAINING SQUEAL OF TIRES BRIDGING ON SLIPPERY PAVEMENT, BUT HE CLEARLY SAW THE CAR BULLET PAST HIM, SPIN OUT OF CONTROL, FLIP OVER! HE SAW THE BODY THROWN IN THE AIR, HEARD IT STRIKE THE GROUND, MEMORIZED THE SOUND. HE LISTENED TO THE CACOPHONY OF GRINDING METAL AND SHATTERING GLASS, FELT THE JARRING IMPACT AS THE AUTO SLAMMED AGAINST THE CONCRETE BARRIER!



THE WOMAN TUMBLED FROM THE ACCORDIONED MACHINE, PLATINUM HAIR NOW TINTED RED, FLESH ONCE POWDER-WHITE NOW WINE-COLORED! DELICATE, JEWELLED FINGERS CLUTCHED HER FACE, CHANGED COLOR WITH THE STREAMING BLOOD THAT STAINED HER CLOTHES, DRIPPED TO THE GROUND AND FURED, DISSOLVED WITH THE PROLICKERING GUTTER WATER. SHE TESTERED URGENTLY...AND FELL!



HE RAN, LAUGHING, FROM THE SCENE. IT WAS GOOD TO KNOW THAT OTHERS COULD FEEL PAIN, COULD SUFFER AND DIE! IT FILLED HIM WITH A DEEP SATISFACTION. HE WAS OVERJOYED, ELATED, *INSPIRED!* BARBLING TO HIMSELF, HE CLIMBED THE NISSEITY STAIRS TO HIS ROOM WHERE HE PAINTED FURIOUSLY, ENTHRANCED, THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF THE NIGHT...



THE COLO, BLEAK LIGHT OF MORNING FOUND THE ARTIST SITTING DUMBLY ON HIS COY, STARRING WITH REDDED EYES AT THE FINISHED PAINTING...



IT'S GOOD. THE BEST I'VE EVER DONE... BUT THE SUBJECT IS SO *DESPIRABLE!* I KNOW OF ONLY ONE PERSON WHO WOULD EVEN LOOK AT SUCH A PICTURE... AND LIKE IT?

SOME TIME LATER THE ARTIST SPOKE EXCITEDLY WITH A SMALL, LECHEROUS OLD MAN WHOSE SMILE NEVER RAVAGED THE PAINTING...



THEM... YOU LIKE IT? YOU'LL BUY IT?

IT'S MAGNIFICENT! REH! PROFOUNDLY FILTHY, YET MAGNIFICENT! I'LL GIVE YOU A HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR IT!

ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS IS A LOT OF MONEY TO A PAUPER, BUT WITH NEXT TO NIK, CLOTHES AND PAINTS TO BUY, AND AN EMPTY BILLY TO BE FILLED, IT DOESN'T LAST LONG.



... MONEY'S ALMOST GONE! HO-HUM, GUESS I'D BETTER KNOCK OFF ANOTHER SABISTIC PAINTING FOR THE OLD MAN!

BRUSHES IN HAND, HE STOOD BEFORE THE EASEL, STRAINING FOR AN IDEA. THE GREATER PART OF A DAY WENT BY, AND STILL HIS CANVAS WAS BLANK...



IT'S NO USE! I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO TURN OUT ANOTHER PICTURE WITH EASE, BUT I CAN'T! I'VE BEEN FOOLING MYSELF!

HE SLUMPED TO HIS COY, LET THE BRUSHES SLIP FROM HIS FINGERS AND SLATTER TO THE FLOOR. HE FOUGHT TO HOLD BACK THE TEARS OF RAGE AND REMENTHMENT THAT WELLED WITHIN HIM...



FOR A WHILE I THOUGHT I WAS BEING RECOGNIZED AS AN ARTIST... AS A PERSON, A HUMAN BEING! BUT I WAS WRONG.

SHE OLD MAN LIKES MY WORK. SHE OLD MAN WITH A DISCISED MIND LIKED THE SINFUL, WICKED PICTURE INSPIRED BY THE BLOOD AND PAIN I SAW IN THAT AUTO ACCIDENT. AND THE REST OF THE WORLD SHUNS ME!



BUT WAIT! THEY'D FEEL DIFFERENTLY IF I WERE A SUGGER. IF I HAD MONEY THEY WOULDN'T TURN FROM ME. THEY'D LOOK UP TO ME, SMILE AT ME. THEY'D WANT TO TALK TO ME, NOT RUN FROM MY RIGHT. AND THEY'D GATHER 'ROUND ME AND THRILL JUST TO TOUCH MY HAND. THEY'D BROVEL AT MY FEET AND PLEAS WITH ME TO CAST THEM A *GLANCE*, A *WORD!* ALL THIS IF I HAD MONEY.



A BLACK REALIZATION ILLUMINATED HIS FACE...

MONEY I CAN GET MONEY FROM THE OLD WAR! WE'LL BUY PAINTINGS FROM ME IF THEY'RE LIKE THE OTHER ONE, AND IF I HAVE TO WATCH THEIR BLOOD SPILL AND SEE THEIR AGONY TO GET INSPIRATION... ALL THE BETTER! I *LIVE* TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE IN PAIN!



THE EVENING FOG CLOSED IN AROUND THE HUNCHER FIGURE STANDING ON THE BRIDGE. ALL EVIDENCE OF THE PREVIOUS ACCIDENT HAD LONG SINCE BEEN REMOVED, BUT THE ARTIST WAITED FOR HOURS... HOPING, PRAYING THAT ANOTHER ACCIDENT WOULD SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY OCCUR...



HE LOOKED AT THE DETOUR SIGNS WITH THEIR RED LANTERNS, USED TO RE-ROUTE TRAFFIC WHILE THE SMASHED AUTO HAD BEEN CLEARED AWAY. HE LOOKED AT THEM STANDING IDLY, INNOCENTLY ON THE WALL...AND THE HOURS SLIPPED BY...



IT WAS ALMOST MIDNIGHT WHEN, IN DESPAIR, HE LEFT THE BRIDGE TO PROWL THE STREETS. ~~SOMEWHERE~~ IN THE CITY THERE MUST BE ANGUISH AND BLOODSHED, WHY DID THEY ~~AVOID~~ IT FROM HIM? WHY DID THEY FRUSTRATE AND TORMENT HIM SO? HE *MUST* FIND INSPIRATION...



AT THREE A.M. HE AGAIN TRIPPED OUT ON THE BRIDGE. THE CITY HAD SUCCESSFULLY HIDDEN ITS SINS FROM HIM THIS FAR, BUT HE WAS NOT TO BE PUT OFF. HE LIFTED THE DETOUR SIGNS AND SET THEM IN THE ROAD, SADDLING THEM TOWARD THE BAR-
RER...



HE HAD TO WAIT BUT A SHORT WHILE BEFORE HE HEARD THE RUMBLING OF TIRES ON MOIST PAVEMENT DRAWING RAPIDLY NEAR. THE CAR ROCKETED OUT OF THE FOG AND WITH A SCREECHING OF BRAKES, BEHEVED TO AVOID THE SIGNS! HE LAUGHED DIABOLICALLY AS IT CAREEMED AND CRASHED INTO THE WALL...



HE RACED TO THE WRECKAGE AND PEERED INSIDE, LAUGHING AS HE SAW THE BROKEN BODIES, FLOWING BLOOD. HE REJOICED IN THE ROARS AND SCREAMS, DANCED MERRILY AND CLAPPED HIS HANDS AND LAUGHED TILL HIS HEAD SPUN IN A WHIRLPOOL OF SUBLINE INSPIRATION...



MORNING, EXHAUSTION. THE FINISHED PAINTING, THE OLD MAN CAGELING AND GIVING HIM MONEY... DELIRIUM...

POSITIVELY FANTASTIC! HEH, HEH! SUCH SACRIFICIAL LUST! YOU MUST PAINT *MORE* OF THESE FOR ME! I'LL PAY YOU *WELL!*



NIGHT. THE POG-BRIDGE BRIDGE, CONFUSED, INTERFERE, DRIBBLES AND THE IMPATIENCE OF WAITING. THE DECISION TO WAIT NO LONGER FOR AN ACCIDENT. THE SHEER THRILL OF VIOLENTLY BEATING A PASSERBY.



HIS ROOM. THE STRAW GOT FEELING AGAIN THE WARM BLOOD, HEARING AGAIN THE TERRIFIED CRIES, RELIVING THE ENTIRE EXPERIENCE... BUT, *NO! NO! NOTHING!* NOT CARING TO PAINT. JUST REVELLING IN THE GLORIOUS SATISFACTION...



MORNING AGAIN... A BLANK CANVAS... AND A REALIZATION.

OH, GOD, I MUST BE *MADDER!* IS MY MIND SO TRISTED THAT I CAUSE BLOOD TO FLOW MERELY FOR THE THRILL I DERIVE FROM ITS SIGHT? AM I SO ENAMORED OF THE WORLD THAT I REJOICE IN THEIR SUFFERING? WHEN IT INSPIRED A PAINTING, THERE WAS A *PURPOSE!* BUT NOW... NOW MY DEPRAVITY HAS REACHED ITS LOWEST DEPTHS! I'VE GOT TO *STOP* THIS MADNESS!



HE FLIES THE SMALL FLOOR, ANIMAL-LIKE, BROWED SMILES CHAINS OF CIGARETTES, GRABE HIMSELF INTO A STUPOR, AND STILL HE FELT THE NEED FOR RELEASE... STILL HE HEARD THE OLD MAN'S PLEAS FOR MORE PICTURES, FELT THE OLD MAN'S MONEY, DREAMED OF THE THING HE COULD GET...



FOR DAYS HE REMAINED IN HIS SHABBY ROOM TRYING TO STIFLE THE URGE TO HURT SOMEONE, TRYING TO FORGET THE SATISFACTION HE RECEIVED FROM PUNISHING THE WORLD AS THE WORLD HAD SO OFTEN PUNISHED HIM...



AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS STRUGGLE, WHEN HIS STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION WERE ALMOST AT THE BREAKING POINT AND HE WAS DISCOURAGED AND MISERABLE BEYOND WORDS, THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. HE OPENED IT, AND THERE SHE WAS, SMILING AND BEAUTIFUL, FLEW EVERY CORNER OF HIS BARREN ROOM WITH A WARM DELIRANCE. IT STAGGERED HIM...



SHE HAD JUST MOVED IN UPSTAIRS AND NEEDED HIS AID TO COMPLETE SOME SMALL TASK. HE ACCEPTED GLADLY... AND WHILE HE HELPED HER, LISTENED TO HER TENDER VOICE, REVELED IN HER WILDERNESS LAUGH, HER RADIANT LOVELINESS. EYES UNBELIEVING, HE MARVELED AT THIS WONDERFUL CREATURE WHO LESS-ENED HIS TENSIONS, DISPELLED HIS HATES, HIS FEARS... AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES, HE HEARD HIMSELF LAUGH...



BUT THOUGH HE LAUGHED QUITE EASILY NOW, THERE SWELT WITHIN HIM THE GUILT AND SHAME OF HIS PART. HE LONGED TO TELL HER OF THESE THINGS, TO CLEARANCE HIMSELF AS SHE WAS CLEAR...



SO HE CONFERRED THE HORRIBLE EMOTIONS, THE VILE DECID THAT ONCE CONSUMED HIS SOUL, BLACK-ENED HIS HEART AND CAUSED HIM TO DESPISE THE GOODNESS IN LIFE. SHE LISTENED...

... I WAS SO CONFUSED. I STARTED OUT LOVING LIFE, BUT WITH EACH FAILURE I BECAME EMBITTERED. I FELT THE WORLD WAS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO FRUSTRATE AND WOUND ME, SO I FOUGHT BACK...



PERHAPS IT'S MERELY THAT BECAUSE A MAN HAS SO MANY EMOTIONS INSIDE HIM, ANYTHING THAT IGNITES THEM WILL CAUSE THEM TO EXPLODE. THE MORE EMOTIONS THERE ARE INSIDE AND THE LONGER THEY'VE BEEN CONFINED, THE GREATER THE EXPLOSION AND IF THEY CAN'T FIND ESCAPE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION... THEY'RE BOUND TO BACKFIRE.



THAT NIGHT HE SLEPT THE SLEEP OF THE INNOCENT, AND DREAMED THE DREAMS OF THE PEACEFUL. IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, HE REALIZED HE LIKED HIS COMPANY AND WANTED TO BE WITH HIM. HE PAINTED HER OFTEN. HE PAINTED OTHER THINGS, ALSO... PLEASANT, SOOTHING PICTURES...



IT ISN'T EASY TO THINK CLEARLY WHEN YOU'RE SO ALL ALONE. WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT AND EVERYONE SEEMS AGAINST YOU, IT'S ONLY NATURAL TO FIGHT BACK... EVEN IF YOUR METHODS ARE PERVERTED! BUT YOUR MIND HAS BECOME SO MIXED UP THAT ANY WAY OUT SEEMS ALL RIGHT!



JEALOUSY FOR INSTANCE, AND LOVE ARE VERY CLOSE TO ONE ANOTHER. ONLY A FINE LINE SEPARATES THEM. JEALOUSY IS A FORM OF HATE... BUT, ACTUALLY, IT'S ONLY LOVE, INVERTED!

I GUESS THAT'S BEEN MY PROBLEM. I HAD SO MUCH LOVE WITHIN ME THAT WHEN THE WORLD SHUNNED ME AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT ME, I TURNED THE LOVE INSIDE OUT... AND IT BECAME HATE!





I REALIZE THESE THINGS NOW, BUT ONLY BECAUSE YOU CAME TO GIVE ME THE RELEASE I SO SOLELY HEEDED. I'M LIKE A RUBBER-BAND THAT'S BEEN STRETCHED ALMOST TO THE BREAKING POINT, AND AT LAST FINDS THE RELEASE THAT ALLOWS IT TO SNAP BACK TO NORMAL!

I NEED YOU, NOT JUST LOVE YOU AND WANT YOU... I NEED YOU... **URGENTLY!** WITHOUT YOU, I KNOW I'LL JUST REVERT TO MY FORMER SELF AND BE LOST FOREVER. WITH YOU, I KNOW I'LL FIND THE STRENGTH I SO DESPERATELY NEED, AS I HAVE FOUND HAPPINESS... BY BEING WITH YOU.



THERE WAS A SILENCE. THEN, TENDERLY, SHE CLIPPED HIS FACE IN HER HANDS AND SAID THE WORDS THAT ALL HIS LIFE, IT SEEMED, HE HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR...

...I LOVE YOU...
...I WANT TO BE YOUR WIFE.



EARLY THE NEXT MORNING THE ARTIST WAITED FOR THE GURL. TODAY THEY WERE GOING TO GET THEIR MARRIAGE LICENSE, BUT SEVERAL HOURS WENT BY AND SHE DIDN'T ARRIVE, AND WITH EACH PASSING MINUTE HE BECAME MORE DISCOURAGED...



BY MID-AFTERNOON HE WAS AT HIS WIT'S-END. HE STORMED ABOUT HIS ROOM IN A FURRY...

SHE'S LEFT ME! I TOLD HER THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF AND FRIGHTENED HER AWAY! OH GOD, WHAT AM I TO DO WITHOUT HER? WHAT AM I TO DO?



LATE EVENING, THE FRUSTRATED, TORTURED SCORING, THE LARGE STINKING DEEP IN HIS CHEST, GROWING MUCH STRONGER, TO HURT SOMEONE. THE TELEGRAM FROM THE HOSPITAL...

SHE...SHE'S BEEN INJURED...
CONDITION **CRITICAL!** CALLING FOR ME... **CALLING FOR ME!**



A MAD RACE THROUGH THE STREETS, TEARS BREAKING HIS FACE, HER NAME TRAILING BEHIND HIM ON THE PAIR DROPS. AND THEN, WHITENESS, WHITENESS EVERYWHERE. WALLS, ROOMS, CLOTHING... AND THEN, THE DOCTOR...



THEY BROUGHT HER IN LAST NIGHT, BUT AND RUN VICTIM. SHE CAME OUT OF HER COMA LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE US YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, BUT I'M AFRAID THERE'S VERY LITTLE HOPE. HER CONDITION IS **EXTREMELY SERIOUS.**



HOW SERIOUS?!
HOW SERIOUS?!
CAN'T SOMETHING BE DONE?!
ANYTHING?!

ONLY A DELICATE AND DANGEROUS BRAIN OPERATION CAN SAVE HER. THERE'S BUT ONE SURGEON SKILLFUL ENOUGH TO DO IT, AND HE WANTS \$3,000 FOR THE JOB! OBVIOUSLY, YOU CAN'T...

THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS?? MIGHT AS WELL BE A MILLION... BUT HE COULD GET IT! THERE WAS *ONE* WAY TO GET IT... A *PAINTING FOR THE OLD MAN*, THE ARTIST WENT INSTINCTIVELY TO THE BRIDGE...



THE LONG WAITING, ANOTHER THE CLICKING OF HEELS, THE FIGURE DISMEMBERING ITSELF FROM THE RUST AND RAIN, FUSING INTO SOLIDITY, THE STRUGGLE, THE HAKKING AND BLOODING, *THE SHAPPING OF THE NECK!* THE THRILLING, SLOTTING, SIZZLING REEL OF SATISFACTION...



HIS ROOM. THE HEETIC WELDING OF BRUSHES ON CANVAS, LASTING TILL LATE THE NEXT AFTERNOON. THE OLD MAN'S REFUSAL TO PAY THE STEEP PRICE! THE QUARREL AND THE FIGHT, THE TAKING OF THE MONEY BY FORCE...



THE HEADLONG DASH BACK TO THE HOSPITAL THROUGH DARKENING STREETS, BUBBLING WITH THE HAPPY KNOWLEDGE THAT AT LAST HE HAD DEFEATED THE WORLD. THEIR FINAL ATTEMPT TO RUIN HIM HAD *FAILED*, FOR DIDN'T HE HAVE THE *MONEY?* JOYFULLY, HE RUSHED ON.



SEE? SEE, DOCTOR? (GASP!) ALL THE MONEY! YOU CAN SAVE HER NOW, (GASP!) CAN'T YOU? YOU CAN SAVE HER FOR ME?

THE PAIDED LOOK IN THE DOCTOR'S EYES, THE NURSE LOWERING HER HEAD, TURNING HER BACK...

I'M... I'M AFRAID I HAVE BAD NEWS FOR YOU, YOU SEE, THE ONE MAN WHO COULD HAVE PERFORMED THE OPERATION... WAS *BRUTALLY MURDERED* LAST NIGHT WHILE CROSSING THE BRIDGE ON HIS WAY TO THE HOSPITAL! MUST HAVE BEEN THE WORK OF A *MORNING-NECK BROKEN... PAKED TO PEEKS... HORRIBLE!*



THE MISERABLE WRETCH SAT HUGGLED ON THE BENCH IN THE DARK CORRIDOR, LISTENING THE FLOOR AROUND HIS FEET WAS A GREEN CONFUSION, USELESS AND FORGOTTEN. HE SAT THERE, TEARS STREAMING DOWN HIS CHEEKS, TINY, PITIFUL SOBS RACKING HIS BODY. HE SAT THERE, STAREING BLANKLY AT THE WALL, LISTENING TO THE CLOCK OVERHEAD RESENTLESSLY TICK AWAY THE SECONDS... AND THEN *SHE WOULD BE DEAD*...



HEH, HEH? CARE FOR A GAME OF *BRIDGE*, ANYONE? YOU BE THE *DUMMY!* BY DOING THOSE PAINTINGS, THE ARTIST GAVE HIS GIRL THE *BRUSH OFF!* DID I KNOW IS, NOBODY BETTER GO WALKING ON THAT BRIDGE LATE AT NIGHT! HEH, HEH? WELL, I SEE THE *GRUMP-KEEPER* IS CHOMPING AT THE BIT, SO I'LL LEAVE BEFORE HE STARTS CHOMPING ME! HE'S GOT A *PEASHY* STORY FOR YOU, SO UNTIL NEXT TIME *DROP DEAD!*



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEY, HO! AND NOW IT'S YOUR **CRYPT-KEEPER'S** TURN TO CURdle YOUR BLOOD. CRAWL INTO THE **CRYPT OF TERROR**, CRUMBS, PLOP DOWN ON THAT TREE STUMP THERE, HELP YOURSELF TO SOME FRUIT, AND WHILE YOU'RE MUNCHING, I'LL NARRATE THE MAUSSEATING NOVELETTE I CALL...

A PEACH OF A PLOT!

IT'S HER, ALL RIGHT, LIEUTENANT. WHAT'S LEFT OF HER, THAT IS! AFTER SEVEN YEARS...IT AIN'T VERY MUCH!

SKULL'S SHATTERED, LOOKS LIKE HE BLUNDERED HER TO DEATH...

OHAY, BOYS. SET HER DOWN TOWN FOR A COMPLETE AUTOPSY. CAREFUL OF THAT TREE, NOW. THAT GOES TOO!



MICHAEL LANE TURNED AWAY, FIGHTING THE MAUSER THAT SWIFT OVER HIM. BESIDE HIM, LIEUTENANT PAUL DELAN, HONKSIDER, STARED AT THE CORPSE LYING AMID THE TWISTING TANGLING ROOTS OF THE YOUNG PEACH TREE. HE STARED AT THE HOLES WHERE EYES ONCE SHINED, AT THE MOUTH THAT WAS ONCE SO MESSABLE, AT THE CRAWLING FLESH OF THE ONCE LOVELY NICK, AND AT THE TREE TRUNK ERUPTING FROM THE ROTTED CHEST...

I ALWAYS *KNEW* YOU MURDERED HER, LANE. I ALWAYS *KNEW* IT.

I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT IF IT WEREN'T FOR...FOR...





THE DETECTIVE INTERRUPTED HIM.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR PEACHES, EH, LANE? YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH MURDER IF IT WEREN'T FOR PEACHES.

IT'S CRAZY, A THING LIKE THIS CAN'T HAPPEN.



AH, BUT IT DID, LANE. AND YOU'LL *BURN* BECAUSE IT HAPPENED. YOU PLANNED ON MURDERING SARAH, DIDN'T YOU? YOU PLANNED IT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING! CAME TO TELL ME THE WHOLE THING NOW?

I... I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.



THEN I'LL TELL YOU, LANE. SEVEN YEARS IS A LONG TIME. LONG ENOUGH TO DO A LOT OF SEARCHING AND ASKING, LOOKING FOR PIECES TO A PICTURE-PUZZLE, AND LAMING EACH PIECE IN... WHERE IT FITS. TOMORROW, I FOUND THE FINAL PIECES TO THE PUZZLE. TOMORROW, THE PICTURE IS COMPLETE. NOW, I'LL TELL YOU.



'YOU MET SARAH BRANDON AT A COCKTAIL PARTY IN 1949. SHE WAS *RICH* AND *LOWLY* AND YOU *WANTED* MONEY. YOU STARTED WORKING ON HER UNTIL FINALLY...

OH, MIKE, DARLING. WE'LL BE SO HAPPY. WE'LL LIVE AT MY COUNTRY PLACE AND...

NOW WAIT A MINUTE, SARAH. DEAR, I INTEND TO SUPPORT YOU. AFTER ALL, I WANT TO MARRY YOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, NOT BECAUSE OF YOUR MONEY...



'SHE BELIEVED YOU, DIDN'T SHE, LANE? SHE REALLY BELIEVED THAT YOU LOVED HER AND NOT HER MONEY. SO YOU WERE MARRIED. BUT AFTER THE HONEYMOON, YOU *DID* COME OUT HERE TO LIVE... TO SARAH'S COUNTRY HOME...

ONLY TILL I GET LOCATED, HONEY? I'M A LITTLE FLAT, NOW.

I UNDERSTAND, MIKE.



'AND THEN YOU WAITED. YOU WAITED UNTIL PEOPLE BEGAN TO TALK...

THERE DOES THAT *MICHAEL* LANE IN HIS WIFE'S FLASHY CAR, MARRIED HER FOR HER MONEY, THAT'S WHAT HE DID!

YOU'D THINK A MAN WOULD HAVE A LITTLE PRIDE AND TRY TO EARN HIS OWN MONEY!



'BUT NOT YOU, LANE? YOU HAD PLANS. *BIG* PLANS. AND YOU *WANTED* PEOPLE TO TALK LIKE THAT. YOU DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO GET A JOB... TO EARN YOUR OWN KEEP. BUT SARAH DIDN'T CARE. SHE LOVED YOU TOO MUCH. SHE DIDN'T *WANT* YOUR LIVING OFF HER INCOME...

... AND YOU DON'T MIND WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING?

OF COURSE I DON'T MIND, DARLING. I DON'T MIND IF YOU NEVER GO TO WORK. I LOVE YOU BEING NEAR ME ALL DAY LONG.

"IT WAS FRIEDRICH, WASN'T IT LAMÉ? YOU WANTED SARAH TO MIND. IT WAS PART OF THE SCHEME. YOU EVEN BEGAN TAKING ADVANTAGE... TRYING TO ANTAGONIZE HER."

"AND FINALLY SHE BROKE DOWN. FINALLY... SHE BLEW UP. AND THOUGH YOU TRIED TO ACT HURT, SECRETLY YOU WERE GLAD..."

BUT, HERE, YOU CAN USE MY CAR WHENEVER YOU WANT TO. WHY DO WE NEED FINE...

I WANT MY OWN, SARAH! I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO ASK YOU ALL THE TIME...

A NEW CAR? YOUR OWN APARTMENT IN TOWN? MORE CLOTHES THAN YOU COULD POSSIBLY NEED? IS IT TRUE, MIKE? IS IT TRUE WHAT THEY'RE ALL SAYING?

SARAH!

...SO YOU PRESENTED THE ARGUMENT...

IT IS TRUE, ISN'T IT? THAT'S ALL YOU WANTED - ME FOR MY MONEY?

SO WHAT? IT'S A FAIR TRADE. WE EACH HAVE WHAT WE WANTED.

...CREATED QUITE A SCENE...

YOU... NEVER WANTED ME? YOU NEVER LOVED ME?

THE DOOR, BABY! I LOVED THE DOOR!

...AND THE SERVANTS HEARD IT ALL. JUST WHAT YOU WANTED...

THEN... THEN IT'S NO USE GOING ON... SOB... LINE... THIS!

THERE'S THE DOOR!

"YOU'D TIMED IT PERFECTLY, OH, LAMÉ! THE SERVANTS HAD GONE FOR THE DAY BY THE TIME SARAH HAD FINISHED PACKING..."

I'M... LEAVING, MIKE. I'M GOING TO GET A DIVORCE.

YOU'RE A LITTLE FOOL, SARAH. HOW COULD YOU BELIEVE THAT OF ME?

"IT WAS WHAT SHE WANTED TO HEAR, WASN'T IT, LAMÉ? SUDDENLY SHE WAS IN YOUR ARMS AND YOU WERE HOLDING HER QUIVERING BODY AND HATHING HER AND BATHING THE THINGS YOU HAD TO SAY..."

OH, MIKE, MIKE. TELL ME IT ISN'T TRUE.

OF COURSE IT ISN'T TRUE, SARAH. I MARRIED YOU BECAUSE I LOVED YOU. YOU'LL SEE. I'LL MAKE IT UP. TOMORROW, I'LL LOOK FOR A JOB, REALLY...

"THAT LAST NIGHT WAS FUN, WASN'T IT LANE? MAKING LOVE TO HIM, AND WAITING...WAITING TO CATCH HER OFF GUARD."

"I'M SO ASHAMED, MIKE! I'M SORRY ABOUT THOSE THINGS I SAID."

"I'M THE ONE THAT'S SORRY, HONEY!"

"AND THEN YOU FOUND YOUR OPPORTUNITY? REMEMBER, LANE? SHE WAS SITTING IN THE LIVING ROOM MUNCHING ON SOME FRUIT. THE BLINDS WERE DRAWN. IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT..."

"HUNGRY, SARAH?"

"A LITTLE..."

"REMEMBER THE PEACH, LANE? THE ONE YOU STRUCK HER WITH THE FORK..."

"SPOON..."

"REMEMBER THE GARGLING SOUND THAT SHE MADE AND THE PEACH JUICE DRIZZLING OUT OF HER MOUTH AND HER EYES BULGING AND HER FACE TURNING BLUE AS YOU BEAT HER TO DEATH? REMEMBER, LANE...?"

"REMEMBER HOW YOU CARRIED HER LIMP BODY OUT OF THE HOUSE AND BURIED IT OUT IN THE BACK GARDEN..."

"THEN, YOU BURNED HER SUITCASE... THE ONE SHE'D PACKED... IN THE FIREPLACE..."

"...AND CLEANED UP. REMEMBER HOW YOU SCOOPED UP THE HALF-CHUNKED MOUTHFUL OF PEACH FROM THE FLOOR WHERE IT HAD FALLEN FROM HER LIPS AND THREW IT AWAY TOGETHER WITH THE UNEATEN HALF OF THE PEACH..."



LIEUTENANT COLAN POINTED TO THE ROTTED CORPSE WITH THE TREE ROOTS TWIRLING AROUND IT AND THE TRUNK GROWING FROM ITS CHEST.

"YOU DIDN'T NOTICE THAT THE PEACH PIT WAS MISSING, DID YOU, LANE? YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT SARAH HAD SWALLOWED IT AS YOU STRANGLED HER!"

"YOU CALLED US THE NEXT DAY, YOU REPORTED THAT YOUR WIFE WAS MISSING, AND I CAME OVER."

SOME OF HER CLOTHES ARE GONE, LIEUTENANT COLAN. DO YOU THINK SHE'S LEFT HER?

DID YOU AND YOUR WIFE GET ALONG, MR. LANE? ANY ARGUMENTS?

WELL, YES. WE DID HAVE AN ARGUMENT LAST NIGHT. SHE ACCUSED ME OF HARRASSING HER FOR HER MONEY?

I SEE. WELL, WE'LL TRY TO TRACE HER, MR. LANE. DON'T WORRY! I'M SURE SHE'S ALL RIGHT.

'THAT WAS WHEN I GOT SUSPICIOUS, LANE? WHEN A WIFE WALKS OUT ON HER HUSBAND, SHE'S USUALLY EASY TO TRACE. A TRAIN RECOGNITION. A PLANE TICKET. SOMETHING...

YOUR WIFE JUST SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED, MR. LANE.

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HER. I KNOW IT. OH, LORD... IF SHE COMMITTED SUICIDE...

'PEOPLE WHO PLAN ON SUICIDE DON'T PACK BAGS, LANE? I STARTED ASKING QUESTIONS, THE SERVANTS.'

YES. THEY ARGUED THAT NIGHT! SHE THREATENED TO LEAVE!

HE ADMITTED HE DIDN'T LOVE HER. THAT IT WAS HER MONEY...

I SEE. WELL, THANKS...

"REMEMBER HOW I CAME TO YOU..."

I THINK YOU MURDERED HER, LANE? IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO, I'LL PROVE IT.

YOU'RE DRAFT COLAN! I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY.

"YOU ARE A LITTLE WORRIED, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU DECIDED TO TAKE A LITTLE TRIP, WERE THINGS GETTING TOO HOT FOR YOU...?"

I JUST THOUGHT I'D LET YOU KNOW. I HAVE TO GO TO EUROPE... ON BUSINESS. IF YOU FIND MY WIFE, GET IN TOUCH WITH ME, WON'T YOU?

SURE, MR. LANE? SURE!

"YOU STAYED AWAY, DIDN'T YOU, LANE? YOU STAYED AWAY FOR SEVEN YEARS. YOU FIGURED YOU'D COME BACK AND YOUR WIFE WOULD BE LEGALLY DEAD AND HER FORTUNE WOULD BE YOURS, BUT I DIDN'T GIVE UP, LANE. I KEPT PLUSSING..."



"YOU LET YOUR COUNTRY PLACE GO TO RUIN? YOU DIDN'T *WANT* ANYBODY TENDING THE GARDEN, DIGGING AROUND. SO NO ONE NOTICED THE GREEN SHOOT POP THROUGH THE GROUND OVER SARAH'S GRAVE..."



"THE YEARS PASSED AND THE GREEN SHOOT BECAME A STALK..."



"...THEN A YOUNG TREE..."



"...GROWING STRONGER WITH EACH PASSING SUMMER..."



"...UNTIL, LAST WEEK... IT BOOMED FRUIT... A PEACH..."



"I'D HEARD YOU WERE COMING HOME TO CLAIM SARAH'S FORTUNE. TODAY, WHEN YOU ARRIVED, I WAS WAITING..."

"WELL? LIEUTENANT DOLAN, WELCOMING ME HOME I SEE? NEVER FOUND MY WIFE, DID YOU BAB?"

"NO, LANE. YOU WERE TOO CLEVER. I STILL SAY YOU MURDERED HER, BUT I CAN'T PROVE IT."



"YOU WERE TRIUMPHANT, WEREN'T YOU, LANE? YOU INVITED ME IN. YOU GLOATED. AND THEN, YOU SPOTTED THE TREE..."

"... YOU KNOW, DOLAN? SEVEN YEARS? HER FORTUNE IS *MINE*... NOW... I... E..."

"WHAT IS IT, LANE? WHAT DO YOU SEE?"



YOU TRIED TO COVER UP YOUR SHOCK AT SEEING THE DEAD TREE GROWING OUT OF SARAH'S GRANT. YOU MADE A FEELER EXPLANATION...

IT'S... IT'S JUST... THAT THE GARDEN IS SO NEGLECTED.

YES. IT IS A SHAME. IS THAT A YOUNG PEACH TREE, LANE?

YOU WERE PRETTY GOOD AT COMPOSING YOURSELF, LANE. I LIKED THE WAY YOU STRODE OVER TO THE TREE...**BLEME!**

WELL? SO IT IS? I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN I'D PLANTED IT! LOOK! IT'S BORNE FRUIT.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU LIKED PEACHES, LANE! I KNOW YOUR WIFE DID!



...HOW HAPPILY YOU PLUCKED THE PEACH FROM ITS LIME...

WET I LOVE PEACHES?

...AND BARE YOUR TEETH INTO ITS PULPY SUCCULENT MEAT...



...AND HOW THE BICKLY RED LIQUID SPLATTERED OUT, OVER YOUR FACE, INTO YOUR MOUTH, BASSING YOU WITH ITS SALTY NICHARDS, COVERING YOUR SHIRT WITH A CHINCHON SWEAT...

GOOD LORD! CHORE...

BLOOD!



THEY WERE LIFTING THE FOUL-SMELLING, DECAYED CORPSE AND CARRYING IT OFF. MICHAEL, KITCHER, LOOKING DOWN AT HIS BLOOD-BOARDED SHIRT, LIEUTENANT OSLAN SMILED...

YES, LANE! IT WAS BLOOD. HUMAN BLOOD! SO I KNEW WHERE TO LOOK! I KNEW THEN WHERE SARAH WAS BURIED!

THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN...CHORE.



HEH, HEH. NOW WASN'T THAT A **JUDY** PEACH OF A YARN, RICHEST OF COURSE IT WAS A **BLOODY SHAME** THAT NIXE PIT OFF MORE THAN HE COULD SWEAT.

BY THE WAY I'VE TAKEN SOME OUT-TINGS FROM THE TREE GROWING FROM SARAH'S GRANT. I'M GOING INTO THE **HURDERY BUSINESS**, LANDSCAPING HAMFIRE GARDENS! NOW I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE VAULT-KEEPER! **WEE!**



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ONE SHOT

Through the bushes, where he crouched, Mescalf could see the man standing high above him, looking out over the valley from what seemed the very edge of the cowering cliff. Silhouetted that way against the pale noonday sky, the rankest beginner would find it hard to miss the kind of target the man presented. And, Mescalf reflected, *he was far from an amateur when it came to firearms.* This was the moment he had been anticipating so long...

For a whole minute, hidden there among the scrub brush near the foot of the sheer rock wall, Mescalf sighted along his rifle barrel. When he finally squeezed the trigger, it was almost with a feeling of sadness that he must finally relinquish this complete control over the destiny of the creature up there above him. The shot that sounded clangorously through the canyon was almost an anticlimax. Then, for a second, there was a surge of exhilaration as Mescalf saw the man spin, sprawl out in space and plummet down a thousand feet... a flailing and most ungraceful object amidst the hail of rock which crashed to the valley floor with a reverberating hiss.

It was only a few seconds later that Mescalf came crashing through the underbrush and knelt beside the man he had just murdered. The sight was one of utter revulsion; Mescalf felt the triumph was a hollow one when he saw the pickable object he had finally conquered. For a long moment he glared at the dead man he had hated for so many years... the man who had sworn that someday he

would bring about Metcalf's own death.

Metcalf straightened up and a smile slowly thawed his grim features. One more shot, he thought, would make it appear . . . to anyone in the vicinity . . . that there had been an exchange of bullets: that he had fired in self-defense. His rifle swung out in front of him and, once again, he sighed along its shining length. Slowly he zeroed in on a solitary rock far above him. His fingers tightened and he felt the gun back against his shoulder; far above he saw the rock disintegrate into a thousand pieces. With a broad grin he lowered the gun and began to retrace his steps into the undergrowth. Like the sound of an oncoming wave, at that moment, he heard the sound billowing up there on the cliff. The smile vanished from his face in the next instant; the rock he had smashed had evidently dislodged another rock . . . and *that* one fell another. The whole mountain seemed to be crumbling . . . cascading down upon him . . .!

He dropped his gun and started to run, but already the first loosened stones were pelting him . . . seining against his face and chest, and thudding painfully into his skin. He screamed once . . . but the sound was drowned beneath the raging thunder which was engulfing the valley.

He slipped and sprawled full length; then the whole cliff seemed to explode down upon him. The word "landslide" entered his hysterical brain . . . and he felt the crunch of sharp stone piercing his lungs, crushing his arms, pinning him there under a blanket of rock. A final meteor seemed to be plunging straight at him . . . and he shut his eyes in horror, just a fraction of a second before it smashed his face into a thousand agonized splinters, pounding him like grains of sand beneath a savage steel-shod boot . . .



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THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! Well, I've another Brodbury for you this issue! If you'll just shift your eyesight . . . WHOA, THERE! NOT NOW! LATER! . . . you'll find "The Lake," masterpiewed by Cooney Joe Orlando. And now for some comments on Brodbury's "Let's Play Pounce," which appeared in Vault of Horror No. 29!

Dear Vault-Keeper,

The story by Mr. B., as you call him, was a brilliant I hope you have many more of this type. I recommend your comic to all of my friends. All of your stories are really good! (And of course, that's what we're paying our dime for!)

Maxime Louis
Brooklyn, Mass

Dear V.K.,

Ray Brodbury is the best horror writer in the business, bar none! And I'm glad to see a teaming up between Ray and E.C. I'm also glad to see that the picture of you in the circle on the cover has finally been brought up to date, so that it looks like you! I hope the other two Ghoulies will get their pictures modernized too.

Don Thompson
Grand Valley, Pa.

As you can see by a quick glance at the cover of this here issue, Don, a complete new set of paired portraits, masterfully modernized by our respective boys . . . Johnny "Gothic" Chang, Brooklyn Jack Davis, and Glimly Graham Ingels . . . has replaced the out-moded set.

Dear Shop-ince,

After reading V.H. No. 28, I'm convinced that Jack Davis is THE artist to do the Brodbury stories! No one can approach him!

Peter Enoll
Delight Ind

Jack does a fine job, Pete . . . no doubt about it! But take the job Joe Orlando does on "The Lake," which starts on the page facing this one . . . WHOA, THERE! NOT YET! LATER!

Dear Vault-Keeper,

As far as I'm concerned, E.C. is the only comic book publishing company in the world. It makes me sick to see how these imbeciles copy past Mack, Ed rather than ONE E.C. story, then a hundred of those mopey-in-lured, slimy, stinky, crudely, vulgar . . . well I'll leave the other criticisms up to you. I want to tell Ray Mack how. How about a thing like that "Artist-of-the-Issue" business, but call it the "Writer-of-the-Issue"?

Ed Finch
(no address given)

Mr. Brodbury's boy appears on the inside front cover of this issue, Ted. As to the "other adjectives" you left up to me, I will in turn leave them up to my other readers!

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I've just read your ghilal title tale in V.H. No. 29 of

how much of a struggle you have to put up with. I thought I would pick out a few words of encouragement to you and tell you how much I enjoy your mag. Although I am a college student, and theoretically supposed to be above perusing such literature, I feel a large charge from yours, and all the other E.C. publications. My gal buys them, every one, and I borrow or steal them as soon as I can. Even a cynical old pal of mine, who doesn't like anything on earth, enjoys your comic to the hilt. He likes the art-work (the copy). I believe you members will outlast all the rest of the newstands. There is plenty of us horror-hungry, half-witted college boys to keep your mag going.

Ronald M. Wade
Commerce, Texas

Dear Vault-Keeper,

We just wanted to thank you for all the nice things you said about us, the readers of E.C. We are happy to know that we are helping, in a small way, to keep E.C. head and shoulders above the rest of the comic magazine publishing companies. That's the way it always has been, and always will be.

Mark Flynn and Norman Reedick
(no address given)

So WHO said nice things? So WHO writes ghilal title tales of woe? Ma? WHOA, THERE! NOT ME! THEM! THE EDITORS! THE MAGGOTS-INFERNO, SLIMY, PUTRID, CRUDDY, VULGAR . . . IDIOT EDITORS! THEY took my columns from me, and THEY added out their tale, and THEY said nice things, and THEY are looking to make money, and THEY don't give ME more, so I don't give a hawling hoot what happens! (WHOA, THERE! NOT NOW! AND NOT LATER, EITHER, YOU FLEA BITCH, VULGAR-FOKED OLD WHIP-BOG!) Let ME take over at this point! Seriously, readers, we'd like to thank you for the very nice letters you've sent us in response to the appeal for your support that we made to you in V.H. No. 29. Just to keep you posted on the latest events bearing on the ever-crowding of titles . . . and subsequent poor-sales . . . situations in the comic industry, we have it on fairly reliable authority that practically every comic publisher is in the process of dropping titles and cutting back operations, that three of the larger ones have suspended operations, and that at least one other has permanently left the scene! We at E.C. will continue to publish . . . at least for the time being . . . our entire line of ten titles. Again, we thank you! O.K. V.K.! Take care! You have had enough more left to mailed everyone that the Third Annual TALE OF TERROR is still available for \$50, that a subscription to any E.C. title costs \$50, and that the address for mail, T. of T. agents, subscription orders, and out-of-business publishers is:

The Vault-Keeper
Room 704, Dept. 38
323 Lafayette Street
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.

So go to it, old man--editor!

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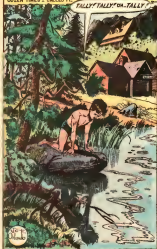
HERE IS MY ADAPTATION OF  
RAY BRADBURY'S...

# The Lake



IT WAS SEPTEMBER, IN THE LAST DAYS WHEN THINGS ARE  
GETTING BAD FOR NO REASON. THE BEACH WAS LONG AND  
LONELY. ALL OF THE HOT DOG STANDS WERE BOARDED UP  
WITH STRIPS OF GOLDEN PLANKING, SEALING IN THE MUS-  
TARD, ONION, MEAT ODORS OF THE LONG, JOYFUL SUMMER.  
IT WAS LIKE MAILING SUMMER INTO A SERIES OF COPPERS,  
THE WHO HAD COME AND TOUCHED THE SAND, BLOWING  
AWAY ALL OF THE MILLION FOOTPRINTS OF JULY AND  
AUGUST. I WAS ALONE. I CALLED BEN NAME, A  
DOZEN TIMES I CALLED IT.

TALLY! TALLY! DA-TALLY!



EVERYONE ELSE WAS IN SCHOOL. I WAS NOT.  
TOMORROW, I WOULD BE ON MY WAY WEST ON A  
TRAIN. I HAD COME TO THE BEACH FOR ONE LAST  
BRIEF MOMENT. I WENT DOWN TO THE WATER AND  
LET IT COOL UP TO MY STOMACH, ALWAYS BEFORE.  
WITH THE CHOW, I HADN'T DARED TO LOOK, TO  
COME TO THIS SPOT AND SEARCH AROUND IN THE  
WATER AND CALL BEN NAME. BUT NOW...

TALLY! COME BACK TO ME,  
TALLY!



FUNNY, BUT YOU REALLY EXPECT ANSWERS TO YOUR  
CALLING WHEN YOU ARE YOUNG. YOU FEEL THAT  
WHATEVER YOU SAY THINK CAN BE REAL, AND  
SOMETIMES, THAT IS NOT SO WRONG. I THOUGHT  
OF TALLY, SWIMMING OUT INTO THE WATER... LAST  
MAY...





TALLY WITH HER PISTOLS TRAILING, BLOODED, SHE WAS LAUGHING, AND THE SUN WAS ON HER SMALL TWELVE YEAR OLD SHOULDERS...



I THOUGHT OF THE WATER SETTLING QUIET...



...OF THE LIFEGUARD LEAPING INTO IT... OF TALLY'S MOTHER SCREAMING...



TALLY NEVER CAME OUT. THE LIFEGUARD TRIED TO PERSUADE HER TO COME OUT, BUT SHE DID NOT. HE CAME BACK WITH ONLY BITS OF WATER-WEED IN HIS BIG-KNUCKLED FINGERS...



I WAS ONLY TWELVE, BUT I KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVED HER. IT WAS THAT LOVE THAT COMES BEFORE ALL SIGNIFICANCE OF BODY AND MORTALITY. IT WAS A LOVE THAT WAS MADE OF WARM LONG DAYS TOGETHER AT THE BEACH...



TALLY WAS GONE. SHE WOULD NOT SIT ACROSS FROM ME AT SCHOOL ANY LONGER, OR CHASE INDOOR BALLS ON THE BACK STREETS OR SUMMER NIGHTS. SHE HAD GONE OUT TOO FAR AND THE LAKE WOULD NOT LET HER RETURN. AND NOW IN THE LONELY AUTUMN WHEN THE SKY WAS HUGE AND THE WATER WAS HUGE AND THE BEACH WAS SO VERY LONG, I HAD COME DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, ALONE...



IT WAS MADE OF THE HUMMING QUIET DAYS OF DREAMING EDUCATION AT THE SCHOOL, AND ALL THE LONG AUTUMN DAYS OF THE YEARS PAST WHEN I HAD CARRIED HER BOOKS HOME FROM SCHOOL...





I CALLED HER NAME FOR THE LAST TIME. I SHIVERED. I FELT WATER ON MY FACE AND DID NOT KNOW HOW IT GOT THERE. THE WAVE HAD NOT SPLASHED THAT HIGH...



BUT THIS TIME, I ONLY BUILT HALF A SAND CASTLE. THEN I GOT UP.

AFTER A WHILE, THE WATER CAME IN...



TUNING, I RETREATED TO THE SAND AND STOOD THERE FOR HALF AN HOUR, HOPING FOR ONE GLIMPSE, ONE SIGN, ONE LITTLE BIT OF TALLY TO REMEMBER. THEN, I KNELT AND BUILT A SAND CASTLE, SHAPING IT FINE, BUILDING IT AS TALLY AND I HAD OFTEN BUILT SO MANY OF THEM...



...BLENDING THE SAND-CASTLE, BURNING IT DOWN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, INTO THE ORIGINAL SMOOTHNESS...

SILENTLY I WALKED ALONG THE SHORE. FAR AWAY, A MERRY-GO-ROUND JANGLED FAINTLY... BUT IT WAS ONLY THE WIND...



THE NEXT DAY I WENT AWAY ON THE TRAIN. A TRAIN HAS POOR MEMORY. IT SOON PUTS ALL BEHIND IT. IT FORGETS THE CORN LANDS AND RIVERS OF CHILDHOOD, THE BRIDGES, THE LAKES, THE WALLS, THE CERTAINS, THE HURTS AND THE JOYS. IT SPREADS THEM OUT BEHIND AND THEY DROP BACK OF THE HORIZON...



I LENGTHENED MY SHOES, PUT PLEIN ON THEM, CHANGED MY YOUNG MIND FOR AN OLDER ONE, THREW AWAY CLOTHES AS THEY NO LONGER FITTED, SWIFTED FROM GRAMMAR TO HIGH SCHOOL, TO COLLEGE BOOKS, TO LAW BOOKS...





AND THEN THERE WAS A YOUNG WOMAN, MARGARET, IN SACRAMENTO. I KNEW HER FOR A TIME, AND WE WERE MARRIED...



LAKE BLUFF, POPULATION 10,000, CAME UP OVER THE HILL. MARGARET LOOKED SO HANDSOME IN HER FINE NEW CLOTHES. SHE WATCHED ME AS I FELT MY OLD WORLD SATURDAYS BACK INTO ITS LIVING. SHE HELD MY ARM AS THE TRAIN SLID INTO BLUFF STATION, AND OUR PASSAGE WAS ESCORTED OUT...



I HAD THAT FEELING AGAIN OF WANTING TO BE ALONE. BUT I COULD NOT FORCE MYSELF TO SPEAK OF THIS TO MARGARET...

IT WAS LATE IN THE DAY. THE BEACH WAS ALMOST DESERTED. THE LIFEGUARD BOAT PULLED UP ON THE SHORE. THE LIFEGUARD STEPPED OUT OF IT, SLOWLY, WITH SOMETHING IN HIS ARMS...



AND WE CAME BACK...BACK TO LAKE BLUFF...FOR OUR HONEY-MOON. LIKE A MEMORY, A TRAIN WORKS BOTH WAYS. A TRAIN CAN BRING PUSHING BACK ALL THOSE THINGS YOU LEFT BEHIND SO MANY YEARS BEFORE...



WE STAYED ON TWO WEEKS IN ALL, REVISITING ALL THE PLACES TOGETHER. THE DAYS WERE HAPPY. I THOUGHT I LOVED MARGARET WELL. AT LEAST I THOUGHT I DID. IT WAS ON ONE OF THE LAST DAYS THAT WE WALKED DOWN BY THE SHORE...



I PROVE THERE. I HELD MY BREATH AND I FELT SMALL... ONLY TWELVE YEARS OLD, VERY LITTLE, VERY IMPERTINENT AND AFRAID...





THE WIND HOWLED. I COULD NOT SEE MARGARET. I COULD SEE ONLY THE BEACH, THE LIFEGUARD SLOWLY EMERGING FROM THE BOAT WITH A GREY SACK IN HIS HANDS, NOT VERY HEAVY, AND HIS FACE ALMOST AS GREY AND LINED...



I WALKED SLOWLY DOWN THE SAND TO WHERE THE LIFEGUARD STOOD. HE LOOKED AT ME...



THE LIFEGUARD KEPT LOOKING AT ME FOR A LONG TIME AND HE COULDN'T SPEAK. HE PUT THE GREY SACK DOWN ON THE SAND, AND THE WATER WHISPERED NET UP AROUND IT AND WENT BACK...



I WAITED...



HE NODDED...



I STARED AT THE SACK. THE WIND WAS LOUD.





THEN, PERHAPS HE SAW THE WAY MY FACE MUST HAVE LOOKED, HE FUMBLING WITH THE SACK, OPENING IT ONLY PART WAY. IT WAS ENOUGH, THERE WAS ONLY THE SKY AND THE WIND AND THE WATER AND AUTUMN COMING ON LOVELY. I LOOKED DOWN AT HIM THERE...



TALLY...  
TALLY...

FOUND HIM DOWN THE  
BEACH, THAT WAY, IN THE  
SHALLOW WATER...



IT'S A LONG LONG TIME  
FOR HIM, AIN'T IT?

YES... IT IS. OH GOD,  
YES IT IS!

I THOUGHT...

PEOPLE GROW. I HAVE GROWN.  
BUT SHE HAS NOT CHANGED. SHE  
IS STILL SMALL. DEATH DOES NOT  
PERMIT GROWTH OR CHANGE. SHE  
STILL HAS GOLDEN HAIR, SHE WILL  
BE FOREVER YOUNG AND I WILL  
LOVE HER FOREVER, OH GOD, I  
WILL LOVE HER FOREVER.



THE LIFEGUARD TIED UP THE SACK.  
I WALKED BY MYSELF, DOWN THE  
BEACH, DOWN TOWARD WHERE HE'D  
FOUND HER. THERE, AT THE WATER'S  
EDGE, LAY A SAND CASTLE, ONLY  
HALF-BUILT...



JUST LIKE TALLY AND I USED TO  
BUILD THEM. SHE HALF, AND I  
HALF. I LOOKED AT IT. I KNELT  
BESIDE IT AND I SAW THE LITTLE  
PRINTS OF FEET COMING IN FROM  
THE LAKE AND GOING BACK OUT TO  
THE LAKE AGAIN AND NOT EVER  
RETURNING...



AND THEN, I KNEW...



I'LL... HELP YOU  
FINISH IT,  
TALLY...

I DID. I BUILT THE REST OF IT  
UP VERY SLOWLY, THEN ANGER...



... AND TURNED AROUND AND  
WALKED OFF, SO AS NOT TO  
WATCH IT CRUMBLE IN THE  
WAVES THE WAY ALL THINGS  
CRUMBLE. I WALKED BACK UP  
THE BEACH TO WHERE A  
STRANGE WOMAN NAMED  
MARGARET WAITED FOR ME,  
SMILING...



THE  
END



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

WEE, WEE! AND NOW IT'S WIND-UP TIME IN K.K.'S MAG, AND SO AS NOT TO DISAPPOINT ANY OF YOU HUNGRY SNOOZES WHO STILL HAVEN'T SATISFIED YOUR APPETITE FOR HORROR, YOUR HOSTESS IN THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE OLD WITCH, WILL NOW SLING SLIME. THIS DISGUSTING DELIRIUM INTO DELIRIUM IS A GALL THE PUTRID PORTION OF PROSE...

## ONE GOOD TURN...

THE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAD BEEN WONDERFUL MONTHS FOR JENNIFER. THINGS HAD CHANGED. EAGERLY SHE WOULD RUSH HOME EACH NIGHT TO TELL EDWIN, HER HUSBAND, OF HER LATEST EXPLOIT, AND EDWIN WOULD LIE THERE, LISTENING TO JENNIFER, WHILE SHE DESCRIBED HER RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENT. POOR DEAR EDWIN, BED-RIDDEN EDWIN. PARALYZED FOR THE LAST EIGHT YEARS. YES, THINGS HAD CHANGED FOR EDWIN AND JENNIFER. THINGS WERE DIFFERENT NOW...

IT'S JENNIFER EDWIN.  
DEAR! I'M HOME!

JENNIFER STOOD IN THE HALL, SHIVERING FROM THE BLEAK WINTER COLD THAT DRIPPED THE OUTSIDE WORLD INTO ICEY PUT. CAREFUL, SHE REMOVED HER TREASURED COAT AND HUNG IT IN THE CLOSET...

OH, I'VE HAD SUCH A WONDERFUL DAY, EDWIN, DEAR. WAIT TILL I TELL YOU!



JENNIFER TOOKLED DOWN THE HALL TO THE BEDROOM DOOR. SHE OPENED IT A CRACK AND PEEKED IN. EDWIN LAY, SILENT, IN THE HUGE ANTIQUE DOUBLE BED...

JUST LET ME FIX MYSELF SOME TEA, MY DARLING. THEN I'LL COME TO BED AND TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT.



THE TEAPOT STOOD IN ITS USUAL PLACE ON THE OLD STOVE. JENNIFER LIT THE GAS AND PUT OUT A CUP AND SUGAR, HUMMING SOFTLY. SHE RAISED HER VOICE SO EDWIN COULD HEAR HER...

MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY CAN GIVE ONE SUCH A FEELING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND SATISFACTION, EDWIN.



SHE SAT QUIETLY AT THE SPOTLESS TABLE, STIRRING THE WARM BREAD...

OH, EDWIN, I'M SO GLAD I FOUND THAT PEOPLE NEED ME. IT'S SO NICE TO KNOW YOU'RE NEEDED. IT'S SO NICE TO KNOW YOU CAN DO THINGS FOR PEOPLE.



JENNY DRAINED THE TEACUP DRY AND WASHED IT IN THE SINK AND PUT IT AWAY. THEN SHE REFILLED THE POT AND PUT IT BACK ON THE STOVE...

I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A MINUTE, DARLING. SOON AS I WASH UP AND GET INTO MY BATH...



THE WATER SPLASHED LOUDLY IN THE SINK. JENNY SANG SOFTLY AS SHE WASHED AND WIPED AND COMBED AND CREAMED AND DID ALL THE THINGS THAT WOMEN DO IN PREPARATION FOR BED...

THERE. NOW I'M READY. I WOULDN'T TOO LONG, WAS I, EDWIN? I ARRIVED AS FAST AS I COULD. DEAR EDWIN, IS IT ANYONE BEING LEFT ALONE ALL DAY?



SHE WAS BESIDE HIM NOW, BETWEEN COOL SHEETS, BRUSHING UP TO HIM, STROKING HIS HAIR, KISSING HIM...

IT WAS SO WONDERFUL TODAY, EDWIN. I MET HIM NEAR THE RIVER. HE LIVED IN AN OLD SHACK. YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HIM, EDWIN? HE WAS SO UNHAPPY. HE TOLD ME ALL ABOUT IT...



"HIS NAME WAS BENTON. I CALLED HIM BERT. HE TOLD ME NOW, ONCE UPON A TIME, HE'D BEEN RICH, VERY RICH..."

BUT THEN I LOST IT ALL, JENNY! THE CRASH, YOU KNOW, AND I LOST MY FRIENDS, TOO, AND MY WIFE. AND I WAS TOO OLD TO START ALL OVER AGAIN...

POOR BERT. YOU MUST BE VERY UNHAPPY!







OH, I WAS, JENNY!  
I WAS VERY  
UNHAPPY!

I'D LIKE TO  
MAKE YOU HAPPY  
AGAIN, DEET.



OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT,  
JENNY! IT WAS A LONG  
TIME AGO. I'VE GOTTEN  
OVER IT AND... JENNY!  
WHAT... WHAT ARE  
YOU DOING WITH  
THAT KNIFE...?

I'M GOING  
TO MAKE  
YOU HAPPY  
AGAIN, DEET.



NO! NO, JENNY! MY  
GOD! I AM HAPPY.  
NOW I'VE GOTTEN  
USED TO THIS...  
I... JENNY!  
KEEP AWAY...

IT'LL BE SO  
LARGE, BERT.  
YOU WON'T  
BE SAD  
ANYMORE.

JENNY SMILED AND SMILED. HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE STROKED EDWIN'S CHEEK...



DO I STABBED HIM, MY DARLING?  
OH, EDWIN! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN  
HIS FACE. SO CALM. SO SERENE.  
HE LAY THERE ON THE FLOOR WITH  
THAT KNIFE IN HIS CHEST... SMILING!

"I MADE SOMEONE HAPPY TODAY, EDWIN. ARE YOU PROUD OF ME? REMEMBER GRACE? GRACE WAS HER NAME, WASN'T IT? SHE WAS SAYING WHEN I MET HER, I TOLD YOU ABOUT GRACE, EDWIN. REMEMBER..."



SOMETHING WRONG,  
MY DEARY. CAN I  
HELP YOU?

SOO... SOO...  
LEAVE ME  
ALONE! PLEASE!  
GO AWAY!



GONE, MY DEAR. LET'S  
TAKE A WALK! YOU'LL  
FEEL ME ALL ABOUT IT!

REALLY... SOO. ALL I  
WANT IS TO BE LEFT  
ALONE... SOO...

AND THAT'S THE STORY, JENNY! HE WALKED OUT ON ME. LEFT ME FLAT, WITHOUT A DIME. AND I TRUSTED HER... BELIEVED IN HER.



YOU POOR, DEAR  
BART! HE'S MADE  
YOU SO WASTONED.  
I WANT TO GO SOME-  
WHERE FOR YOU.





WHAT CAN YOU DO, JENNY? IT'S MY PROBLEM, I'LL JUST HAVE TO GET OVER... JENNY? MY GOD?

THIS IS WHAT I CAN DO, GRACE... I CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN.

"THE ROCK LYING ON THE ORIENTED PATH IN THE PARK MADE EVERYTHING SO EASY, I BROUGHT IT DOWN ON GRACE'S SKULL AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL SHE SMILED AS THE BLOOD GURGLED FROM HER LIPS..."

NOW, GRACE... NOW YOU'RE HAPPY!



'AND SORRY, POOR SORRY, REMEMBER ME TELLING YOU ABOUT SORRY, EDWIN? POOR BOY, HE WAS BEATEN AT THE MOST, CHING HIS EYES OUT, POOR LITTLE THING...'

WHAT IS IT, GRACE? ARE YOU LOST? WHAT'S THE MATTER, LITTLE ONE?

I... SOB. I RAN AWAY FROM HOME. AN' NOW... SOB. NOW I'M LOST.



'HE WAS SO UNHAPPY, EDWIN, SO SAD, AND SO EAGER FOR COMFORT, WHEN I TOOK HIM INTO THE ALLEY, HE STOPPED CRYING...'

WHERE ARE WE GOING, AUNT JENNY?

TRUST ME, SIDNEY. I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU HAPPY AGAIN...



'HE LOOKED SO SWEET AS I CLOSED MY FINGERS AROUND HIS SMALL WHITE THROAT, EDWIN, SO AT PEACE WITH THE WORLD AS HE SLIPPED FROM MY GRASP AND FELL TO THE ALLEY PAVEMENT DEAD...'

THERE, MY CHILD, THERE. NOW YOU WON'T EVER CRY AGAIN!



'THESE LAST FOUR MONTHS HAVE BEEN SO WONDERFUL FOR ME, EDWIN, SO WONDERFUL, MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY... RESCUING THEM FROM THEIR MISERY AND DESPAIR...'

BUY A PENCIL. BUY A PENCIL. HELP A BLIND MAN. BUY A PENCIL.

OH, DEAR...



'CAN ANYONE BE MORE WRETCHED... MORE SAD THAN A BLIND MAN, EDWIN? I HAD TO HELP HIM. I HAD TO...'

ALL OF THEM? OR, BLESS YOU, LADY! BLESS YOU!

NOW YOU CAN STOP FOR THE DAY, YOU POOR DEAR, COME. GIVE ME YOUR HANG...



'ONE MINUTE, SAGRESS AND MISERY. THE NEXT MINUTE, PEACE AND CONTENTMENT... SO EASY TO LEAD HIM TO THE STREET, TO GUIDE HIM OFF THE CURB... INTO THE PATH OF THE TRUCK...'

'I'LL TAKE YOU HOME,

'TH-THANK YOU, LADY! YOU'RE SO... KIND...'

'THE ROULETING BRAKES, LIKE PEARLS OF LAUGHTER. THE ONLY THING I REGRET WAS NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE HIM HAPPY AT LAST... HAVING TO LEAVE THE SCENE...'

ANOTHER SOUL, LIFTED FROM THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR TO THE GLORIOUS JOY OF DEATH...

GODD... WHAT LOSS! HAPPENED?



'HOW CAN PEOPLE GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT A MISSION, EDWIN? I USED TO THINK MY MISSION WAS CARING FOR YOU... MAKING YOU COMFORTABLE AFTER YOU BECAME PARALYSED...'

'OH, EDWIN? YOU'RE IN PAIN? I CAN TELL! YOUR EYES...'



'BUT THAT WAS BEFORE I FOUND MY REAL PURPOSE IN LIFE. THAT WAS BEFORE THE OLD WOMAN ON THE FIER...'

'I SAT HERE, DAY AFTER DAY, AND I WAIT. I KNOW I'LL NEVER COME HOME TO ME BUT I WAIT ANYWAY...'

YOU POOR THING...



'REMEMBER HER, EDWIN? SHE WAS A SOLDIER. SHE WAS SO SAD...'

'HE WAS A WONDERFUL BOY, JENNY. A GOOD BOY... WITH HIS WHOLE LIFE AHEAD OF HIM. HE...'

DON'T BE UNHAPPY, THELMA. I HATE TO SEE PEOPLE UNHAPPY.



'HOW SHE FLOUNDERED IN THE WATER, HOW SHE SCREAMED, AND HOW SERENE AND CONTENT SHE LOOKED AS SHE WENT DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME, THE MURKY RIVER POURING INTO HER LUNGS THROUGH HER SMILING LIPS...'



'FOUR MONTHS IT'S BEEN, EDWIN. FOUR MONTHS SINCE I DISCOVERED MY MISSION IN LIFE. REMEMBER THE DAYS IT WAS SUNSHY? YOU LAY IN YOUR BED, STAREING OUT AT THE SNOW FALLING ON THE BARE DEAD TREE OUTSIDE OUR BED-ROOM WINDOW...'

WHAT OF IT, EDWIN? YOU LOOK SO SAD TODAY. WHY... YOU'RE CRYING...





"I COULD SEE THE TEARS FILLING YOUR STARING EYES. I COULD SEE ALL THE SADNESS AND DESPAIR OVERFLOWING YOUR EYELIDS AND TRICKLING DOWN YOUR CHEEKS..."



"DON'T CRY, EDWIN! DON'T BE SAD. I CAN'T STAND TO SEE YOU UNHAPPY."

"I KNOW WHAT, EDWIN. I KNOW WHAT? I'LL MAKE YOU YOUR FAVORITE DRINK. I'LL MAKE YOU A HOT CHOCOLATE. WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE...?"



"AND SUDDENLY, ON THAT DAY FOUR MONTHS AGO, I KNEW. I KNEW HOW TO MAKE YOU HAPPY. SO I WENT INTO THE KITCHEN AND I MADE YOU YOUR FAVORITE. HOT CHOCOLATE..."



"I'LL BE FINISHED SOON, EDWIN."

JENNY LAY BESIDE EDWIN IN THE HUGE ARTISTE BED. SHE WHISPERED SOFTLY, STROKING HIS CHEEK...



"AND WHEN I'D FINISHED MAKING YOUR DRINK, I PUT THE... THE... OH, DEAR! WHO CAN THAT BE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?"

"OPEN UP IN THERE!"

THE HEAVY POUNDING ON THE FRONT DOOR ECHOED THROUGH THE HOUSE. JENNY NISSED EDWIN AND SLID OUT OF BED...



"I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, EDWIN. I'LL SEE WHO IT IS AND BE RIGHT BACK..."

THERE WERE TWO OF THEM... HORROR-FACED MEN PEERING OUT OF THE DARKNESS AT HER...



"MIND IF WE CAME IN, MA'AM?"

"WE'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU"

JENNY LOOKED AT THE BUNNY BACKS THAT ONE OF THEM HELD OUT TO HER. SHE SLACED OVER HER SHOULDER DOWN THE HALL...



"WELL... ALL RIGHT. YOU CAN COME IN FOR A MINUTE, BUT PLEASE... KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN. MY HUSBAND'S IN THE BEDROOM..."

"WE JUST WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS."



JENNY CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND THEM. THEY LOOKED AROUND. ONE OF THEM GRINNED...

THE TALLER ONE STARTED DOWN THE HALL... TOWARD THE BEDROOM...



SOMETHING'S **WRONG** HERE, STEVE!

TAKE A **LOOK**, PHIL!

WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



STOP! YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE! EDWIN'S IN THERE! YOU'LL DISTURB HIM! YOU'LL MAKE HIM **UNHAPPY!**

GO AHEAD, PHIL! I GOT HER...

YEAH...

THE ONE NAMED PHIL TURNED INTO THE BEDROOM. JENNY SCREAMED...

PHIL CAME OUT AGAIN, HIS HAND CLAMPPED TO HIS MOUTH. JENNY BEGAN TO SOB...

THE ONE NAMED STEVE PUSHED JENNY TO THE BEDROOM. HE STARED IN JENNY'S DIRECTION...



STAY OUT OF THERE! LEAVE HIM ALONE! I MADE HIM **HAPPY** FOUR MONTHS AGO. DON'T SPOIL IT!

CHOKED...



GOOD LORD! EDWIN! STEVE'S MOTHER!

NO! NO! I DON'T WANT TAKE A LOOK!

TO LOOK! HE WON'T BE **HAPPY** ANYMORE!



OH, MY GOD!

HE... HE'S STILL **HAPPY**! OH... THANK GOODNESS. I THOUGHT YOU'D SPOIL IT!

EDWIN LAY ON THE HUGE ANTIQUE BED. THE FLESH OF HIS FACE WAS BEGINNING TO FALL AWAY REVEALING WHITENED GRIMING TEETH. WHAT THE DETECTIVES HAD NOTICED WAS THE FOUL ODOR OF DECAY THAT SPRUNG FROM HIS LONG-DEAD BODY...



I MADE HIM **HAPPY** FOUR MONTHS AGO. WHEN I PUT **STANIDE** IN HIS **NOSE** IMMEDIATE!

HEE, HEE! THAT'S **IT**! GREEPS, THAT'S MY **FOUL** NAME FOR THIS ISSUE. THEY TOOK POOR EDWIN AWAY AND PUT HER IN A BARRED CELL. WHERE SHE CAN'T MAKE ANYBODY **HAPPY** ANYMORE. BUT SHE TRIES. THE **KEEPERS** HAVE A DEVIL OF A TIME WITH HER. AND NOW IT'S TIME TO PUT OUT THE **FIRE** BENEATH MY **CARDLORD** AND CLOSE THE **PAUL-KEEPER'S** MANTON.



THIS ISSUE, WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, THE MOUNT OF FEAR. 'BYE, HOPE!

5-5-5-5-5-5-5...











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THE OLD WITCH



THE CRYPT-KEEPER





# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! WELL, IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER FRIGHTENING TALE FROM THE VAULT OF HORROR! AS USUAL, I'M JUST DYING TO BEGIN, SO TURN OUT THE LIGHTS AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH! THE BLOOD-CURDLER I'M ABOUT TO TELL IS CERTAIN TO HAVE YOU ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT, SHUDDERING IN ABSOLUTE TERROR! HANG ON TO YOUR NORMALITY, OR THIS ONE WILL REALLY HAVE YOU HANGING ON THE ROPES! I CALL IT...

## WHIRLPOOL



HER MIND WAS WHIRLING AGAIN. THE THREE HORRID CREATURES TOWERED THREATENINGLY OVER HER, HOVERING IN A BLACK ABYSS, AND THEIR QUESTIONS ECHOED AND THUNDERED IN HER EARS, GROWNING HER CRIES AND SHRIEKS FOR HELP...





SHE COULDN'T REMEMBER THINGS! WHO WAS SHE? WHAT WAS SHE DOING HERE? WHAT WAS HER NAME? A HUNDRED QUESTIONS... AND SHE COULDN'T ANSWER! SHE DIDN'T KNOW, ANYMORE! SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER!



STILL THE VICIOUS THINGS TORMENTED HER! SHE COWERED AND TURNED HER EYES FROM THEIR LEERING FACES! SHE SWIRLED, FLOATED, THRASHED DESPERATELY IN THE NOTHINGNESS TO GET AWAY... TO **ESCAPE!** AND SUDDENLY SHE SAW THE WINDOW AND WENT CRASHING THROUGH IT...



SHE RAN DOWN THE DESERTED SILENT STREET, THE CLICKING OF HER HEELS URGING HER TO GO FASTER, **FASTER!** THEY WERE AFTER HER, FOLLOWING WITH THEIR CRUEL QUESTIONS, THEIR SHRIIL, SCREAMING VOICES...



WOULD SHE EVER ELUDE THEM? SHE POUNDED ON DOORWAYS TO GAIN ENTRANCE, SHE CRIED, SHE RAN AGAIN... **FASTER!** AND THE STREET SEEMED ALMOST ENDLESS



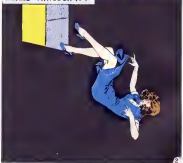
BUT SUDDENLY THERE **WAS** AN END AND THERE WAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO! ANOTHER BUILDING BARRED HER WAY! A BUILDING WITH NO WINDOWS... JUST A DOOR...



SHE SCRAMBLED UP THE STEPS, STUMBLING AND CRYING! SHE SHOUTED AND PLEADED FOR SOMEONE TO HELP HER, CLAWED AND POUNDED FRANTICALLY ON THE DOOR! **THEY WERE ALMOST UPON HER!** SHE HEARD THEIR SCREECHING... AND SHE PRESSED BACK INTO THE SHADOWS, UP AGAINST THE MASSIVE DOOR...



...AND THROUGH IT!





SHE COULDN'T REMEMBER! SHE WAS SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR, SHAKING HER HEAD, TRYING TO CLEAR THE COBWEBS! SHE WAS STILL CRYING, STILL TREMBLING, BUT SHE HAD ESCAPED THOSE AWFUL THINGS! SHE FELT THE HAND TOUCH HER...



ROUGH HANDS DRAGGED HER TO HER FEET. THROUGH A VEIL OF TEARS SHE STARED INTO THE BLAZING EYES OF A FIEND WHO LIFTED HER, SQUIRMING AND KICKING INTO HIS ARMS! HIS LAUGHTER REACHED A NERVE-WRACKING PITCH AS HE CARRIED HER ACROSS THE ROOM...



... AND DROPPED HER INTO A CAULDRON OF BOILING WATER!



SEARING PAINS ENGULFED HER! BOILING WATER BURNED HER MOUTH, SCALDED HER THROAT EVERY TIME SHE CRIED OUT, AND SHE THRASHED TORTUROUSLY TRYING TO CLIMB OUT...



SUDDENLY, STRONG ARMS LIFTED HER FROM THE CAULDRON! HER FLESH WAS BEET-RED AND STEAM ISSUED FROM HER SOPPING BODY! SHE COULDN'T STAND UPRIGHT... HER LEGS WOULDN'T HOLD HER ANYMORE...



SHE FELT HERSELF BEING LIFTED... THEN LOWERED. THROUGH A DIM, SEMI-CONSCIOUS HAZE SHE FELT THE COOLNESS SURROUNDING HER, COMPLETELY COVERING HER, SLOWLY DRAWING THE HEAT FROM HER! IT BECAME COOLER, AND SHE OPENED HER EYES, AND THEN, IT WAS GOLD! IT WAS MUCH TOO GOLD! SHE WAS SURROUNDED BY ICE!



SHE SCREAMED AGAIN AND AGAIN! THE HARDENING ICE NUMBED HER ARMS, HER LEGS! SHE COULDN'T FREE HERSELF, AND AS SHE CRIED CONVULSIVELY, THE TEAR-DROPS FROZE AND HER VISION GLAZED! SHE FELT THE PAINFUL TINGLING IN HER TOES, HEARD THE SHRILL, FIENDISH LAUGHTER FADING... FADING... MERCIFULLY, SHE FAINTED...





WHY COULDN'T SHE REMEMBER ANYTHING? WHO WAS SHE? WHY WERE THEY TORTURING HER? WHAT DID THEY WANT? WHY DIDN'T THEY LEAVE HER ALONE? A THOUSAND QUESTIONS AND SHE COULDN'T ANSWER. SHE OPENED HER EYES... TRIED TO MOVE... AND COULDN'T!



THERE WAS A SHARP PAIN! ANOTHER! AND ANOTHER! SHE SAW A WICKED OLD LADY BENDING OVER HER, CHUCKLING! A LONG, NEEDLE-SHARP HAT-PIN WAS IN HER HAND AND SHE WAS JABBING! JABBING! WOULD THERE BE NO END TO THIS? WOULD NO ONE SAVE HER? AGAIN SHE TRIED TO SCREAM... BUT ONLY A STRANGLED SOB ERUPTED...



THE JABBING CONTINUED. SHE FELT WARM BLOOD TRICKLE... WAS THAT BLOOD? AND EVERY PART OF HER THROBBED AND ACHED. HER HEAD WAS A WHIRLPOOL OF TORTURE.



...AND THE JABBING CEASED! SHE OPENED HER EYES. A TALL, SILENT MAN WAS NEARBY, STARING WITH ANGERED EYES AT THE WICKED OLD LADY. HE RAISED HIS ARM... POINTED HIS FINGER... AND THE LADY HURRIEDLY LEFT THE ROOM.



THE MAN UNTIED HER HANDS AND FEET, GENTLY HELPED HER FROM THE TABLE. SHE TRIED TO SPEAK, TO THANK HIM... BUT ONLY GARBLED, UNINTELLIGIBLE SOBS SPewed FORTH...



STRONG, TENDER HANDS CARESSED HER HAIR AND FACE. WHILE GRATEFUL, HAPPY TEARS SPILLED DOWN HER CHEEKS, HE RESTED HER HEAD ON HIS CHEST PROTECTIVELY AND NODDED IN UNDERSTANDING. YET, HE DID NOT SPEAK...



BUT WHAT DID IT MATTER? HE HAD SAVED HER, HADN'T HE? WASN'T HE KIND, GENTLE? WITHOUT A WORD, HE HELPED HER CROSS THE ROOM, LOWERED HER EASILY INTO A CHAIR! REST! BLESSED REST! SHE CLOSED HER EYES AND LEANED HER HEAD BACK AGAINST THE CHAIR...





SHE KNEW THIS WASN'T JUST A NIGHTMARE! THE PAIN, THE TERROR HAD ALL BEEN *TOO REAL!* IF ONLY SHE COULD REMEMBER HOW, OR WHY, IT STARTED! SHE FELT SOMETHING CLAMP DOWN ON HER WRISTS...TIREDELY, SHE OPENED HER EYES... AND *SCREAMED!*



SHE WAS STRAPPED IN AN ELECTRIC CHAIR! NEARBY, THE SILENT MAN WAS GRINNING INSANELY. HIS EVERY FEATURE WAS CONTORTED INTO A TRIUMPHANT EXPRESSION OF MANIACAL GLEE! NOW HE HAD *FOOLED HER!* SHE PLEADED AND BEGGED FOR SALVATION, UNTIL HIS HAND GRIPPED THE LEVER...AND *PULLED!*



THOUSANDS OF VOLTS SLAMMED THROUGH HER BODY, TEARING AND BURNING...DESTROYING FLESH, BONE, TISSUE! THOUSANDS OF VOLTS PULSATING, COURSEING THROUGH EVERY FIBRE OF HER BEING... MAKING HER TORSO SURGE AND STRAIN AT THE STRAPS THAT HELD HER!



BLACKNESS. PAINLESS, TORTURELESS BLACKNESS. THE EMPTINESS BECOMING SOMETHING, SOLIDITY! A FLOOR? YES! SHE WAS LYING ON A FLOOR SOMEWHERE. AND THE EBONY VOID BECAME SOLID WALLS, FOUR SOLID WALLS, A CEILING AND A FLOOR...BUT NO WAY OUT!



SHE STRUGGLED TO HER FEET AND GROPED AROUND THE SMALL ROOM, FEELING, TAPPING THE WALLS! WAS THIS THE END? WAS THIS *DEATH?*



*WAIT!* WAS HER MIND PLAYING TRICKS ON HER? WAS SHE SEEING THINGS? *NO!* THE ROOM WAS GETTING SMALLER! *SMALLER!*



SLOWLY, ON ALL SIDES, THE WALLS MOVED CLOSER TOGETHER! THE CEILING LOWERED, AND THE SIDES NARROWED. SHE STRETCHED OUT HER ARMS TO KEEP THEM AWAY...





IT WAS NO USE! THE WALLS CLOSED FURTHER AND SHE EXERTED ALL HER STRENGTH! THE PRESSURE BECAME MORE INTENSE! SHE GASPED FOR AIR, PUSHED AND HAMMERED THE WALLS, SCREAMED TILL THE REVERBERATIONS HURT HER EARDRUMS! AND STILL THE WALLS PRESSED CLOSER! SHE COULD NO LONGER STAND UPRIGHT! SHE SLUMPED TO ONE KNEE, CRYING, CHOKING, FEELING THE IMMENSE PRESSURE SQUEEZE AND CRUSH HER! DO A BONE SNAP? HER HEAD THROBBED HORRIBLY, REELING AND ACHING. AND WHEN SHE COULD STAND NO MORE...



SHE LAY GASPING AND TREMBLING ON THE FLOOR. A BRIGHT LIGHT INVADIED THE ROOM'S DARKNESS... AND IN ITS BRILLIANCE, A MAN STOOD IN THE OPEN DOORWAY.



HE HELPED HER TO HER FEET, COMFORTINGLY LED HER DOWN LONG CLEAN-SMELLING CORRIDORS. WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN NOW? HIS WORDS WERE SO SOOTHING... BUT COULD SHE TRUST HIM? HOW COULD SHE KNOW? WHERE WAS HE BRINGING HER? SHE WAS ALMOST TOO WEAK TO CARE...



SHE WAS IN A ROOM, WARM AND COMFORTABLE. THREE NICE MEN SURROUNDED HER, GAVE HER SOFT WORDS OF CONSOLATION. THEY WERE FRIENDLY... SHE COULD TRUST THEM. SHE CRIED BECAUSE IT WAS ALL OVER...

IT WAS AWFUL! (SOB) THEY WERE ALL TRYING TO KILL ME! THE ELECTRIC CHAIR... BOILING CAULDRON... THE WALLS! IT WAS AWFUL! AWFUL!

THERE, THERE! WE WANT TO HELP YOU! SUPPOSE YOU TELL US ALL ABOUT IT!



THEY WERE SO NICE. SHE RELATED HER HARROWING EXPERIENCES. THE TEARS OF RELIEF FLOWED DOWN HER FACE, AND THEY LISTENED ATTENTIVELY...

IT'S SO WONDERFUL NOT TO BE AFRAID! MY MIND IS SO CLEAR NOW! FOR AWHILE I... (SOB) I THOUGHT I WAS GOING INSANE!

OF COURSE! WE UNDERSTAND!





GRADUALLY, HER CRYING CEASED. SHE WAS NOT AFRAID ANYMORE. SHE HAD NO *REASON* TO BE AFRAID NOW! ONLY ONE THING BOTHERED HER!

WHY? WHY DID THEY ALL WANT TO HURT ME SO?

IT'S QUITE SIMPLE! I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN...



ALL THIS TORTURE HAS BEEN IN YOUR *MIND*! IT NEVER REALLY HAPPENED AS YOU THOUGHT! SUBCONSCIOUSLY, YOUR MIND TWISTED EVERYDAY OCCURRENCES INTO HORRIBLE TORTURES! YOU *IMAGINED* THAT PEOPLE WERE TRYING TO *KILL* YOU... WHEN ACTUALLY, THEY WERE TRYING TO *HELP* YOU! FOR INSTANCE...



'YOU SAID YOU WERE PUT IN AN *ELECTRIC CHAIR*! ACTUALLY, ONE OF OUR ATTENDANTS WAS GIVING YOU *ELECTRO-THERAPY*... A FORM OF *SHOCK TREATMENT*.'



'...AND THE *WICKED OLD LADY* WHO JABBED YOU WITH A *HAT-PIN* WHILE YOU WERE STRAPPED TO A TABLE WAS ONLY YOUR *ABNORMAL INTERPRETATION* OF THE NURSE GIVING YOU A *HYPODERMIC INJECTION* WHILE YOU WERE IN A *STRAIGHT-JACKET*, NECESSITATED BY YOUR DISPLAY OF *VIOLENCE*!'



'THE *BOILING CAULDRON* AND THE *ICE* WERE REALLY NOTHING BUT *HOT AND GOLD BATHS*... ANOTHER FORM OF *SHOCK TREATMENT*!'



THE *POE-LIKE* ROOM WHOSE WALLS CLOSED UPON YOU WAS ONLY A *PADOZO CELL*, *ACTUALLY*! *SOLITARY CONFINEMENT*... BECAUSE YOU HAD BECOME SO *IRRATIONAL*! THE WALLS DIDN'T CRUSH YOU... YOU ONLY *THOUGHT* SO, BECAUSE THE SMALL ROOM WAS SO CONFINING!'



I... I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! YOU'RE *LYING* TO ME! YOU'RE TRYING TO *HURT* ME! OH, WHAT AM I *DOING* HERE? WHERE AM I?

YOU MEAN YOU *STILL* DON'T REMEMBER? MY, DEAR... YOU'RE AN *INMATE* IN AN *INSANE ASYLUM*!





SUDDENLY, THE ROOM GREW DIM, NAZY...

OH-H-H I (SOB) I REMEMBER! YOU'RE PERSECUTING ME!

WE'RE TRYING TO HELP YOU! DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR NAME?



THE ROOM FADED AWAY, AND THE THREE DOCTORS SEEMED TO HOVER IN A GRAY MIST GROWING DARKER...

TRY HARD, NOW! TELL US WHO YOU ARE!

YES! WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?



IT WAS DIFFICULT TO THINK! HER MIND WAS JUMBLED...THOUGHTS WOULDN'T ORGANIZE THEMSELVES INTO MEANINGS...



HER MIND WAS WHIRLING AGAIN. THE THREE HORRID CREATURES TOWERED THREATENINGLY OVER HER, HOVERING IN A BLACK ABYSS, AND THEIR QUESTIONS ECHOED AND THUNDERED IN HER EARS, DROWNING HER CRIES AND SHRIEKS FOR HELP...



SHE COULDN'T REMEMBER THINGS! WHO WAS SHE? WHAT WAS SHE DOING HERE? WHAT WAS HER NAME? A HUNDRED QUESTIONS... AND SHE COULDN'T ANSWER! SHE DIDN'T KNOW, ANYMORE! SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER!



STILL THE VICIOUS THINGS TORMENTED HER! SHE COWERED AND TURNED HER EYES FROM THEIR LEERING FACES! SHE SWIRLED, FLOATED, THRASHED DESPERATELY IN THE NOTHINGNESS TO GET AWAY... TO ESCAPE! AND SUDDENLY SHE SAW THE WINDOW AND WENT CRASHING THROUGH IT...



HEH, HEH, HEH! RIGHT BACK WHERE WE STARTED, LEH? ROUND AND ROUND SHE GOES, AND WHERE SHE STOPS, WHO THE DEVIL CARES! OF COURSE, SHE NEVER DID GO THROUGH ANY WINDOW! IT WAS ONLY HER WAY OF TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE FACT THAT SHE WAS...



DERANGED? HOPE I MADE THAT PAINFULLY CLEAR! WELL... AS USUAL, THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CLAMORING FOR ATTENTION, SO EYES RIGHT BEFORE HE HAS A TEMPER-TANTRUM, AWREADY!



# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

GREETINGS, GHOULS...LET'S DRINK BLOOD POOLS! THIS IS YOUR HOST IN THE CRYPT OF TERROR, THE CRYPT-KEEPER, READY TO LEAD ANOTHER SCREAM-SESSION BY NARRATING ONE OF THE HAUSEATING NOVELLETES FROM MY CREEPY COLLECTION OF LURID LITERATURE. SO, HOLD ON TO YOUR LAST MEAL! HERE GOES WITH THE FOUL FABLE I CALL...

## OUT OF HIS HEAD!

THE FAINT WISP OF SMOKE CURLED UPWARD FROM THE DANCING FIRE AND DRIFTED LAZILY OVER THE CAMP-SIGHT. ALEX SLIPPED FROM THE TENT, THE GLEANING CLEAVER IN HIS GLOVED HAND. THE PERSPIRATION PAINTING HIS FACE GLOWED IN THE FIRELIGHT. HE GRIMACED. STANLEY KNELT BEFORE THE FLAMES, STIRRING THE SMOKE-BLACKENED POT. IN A MOMENT IT WOULD BE ALL OVER. IN A MOMENT, STANLEY WOULD BE DEAD AND ALEX'S PROBLEM WOULD BE SOLVED. HE MOVED FORWARD NOISELESSLY, LIFTING THE RAZOR-SHARP CLEAVER HIGH OVER HIS HEAD...

THE STEW WILL BE DONE IN A MINUTE, ALEX. SMELLS DELICIOUS. EVERYTHING READY...?

EVERYTHING'S READY, STANLEY!



STANLEY STIFFENED AS ALEX'S HIGH-PITCHED VOICE EXPLODED BEHIND HIM. HE WHIRLED...TOO LATE. ALEX BROUGHT THE GLEANING CLEAVER DOWN WITH ALL HIS FORCE...



ALEX! MY GOD!  
YAAA...GGH...

UUGH...



IT WAS QUIET IN THE WOODS THAT SURROUNDED THE HUNTERS' CAMP-SITE. FAR AWAY IN THE NIGHT, AN OWL HOOTED. ALEX STARED DOWN AT STANLEY, CROUCHING AS IF STUNNED...THE CLEAVER SUNK DEEP IN HIS HEAD...THE HANDLE JUTTING UPWARD AWKWARDLY...

ALEX HESITATED, A WAVE OF NAUSEA SWEEPING OVER HIM. STANLEY JUST CROUCHED THERE, AS IF FROZEN, NOT STANDING, NOT FALLING...JUST STARRING AT HIM WITH DEAD GLASSY EYES THAT SEEMED TO BURN WITH A FLAME OF SUDDEN UNDERSTANDING.

THE HORROR OF IT. THE CLEAVER STICKING UPWARD. THE BLOOD CURTAINING DOWN OVER THE FROZEN SURPRISED FACE. ALEX TURNED AWAY, COVERING HIS EYES. HE WOULD REMEMBER IT ALWAYS... THE HORROR OF IT. BEHIND HIM, HE HEARD STANLEY'S BODY SLUMP TO THE DAMP GROUND...



CHOKES...



D-D-DIE! DIE, ALREADY!  
**FALL DOWN AND DIE!**



OH, LORD... LORD...

THE HORRENDOUS DEED WAS DONE. LOATHE TO GAZE UPON THE BLOODY REMAINS OF HIS FORMER LAW PARTNER, ALEX MOVED INTO THE TENT, PICKED UP HIS GUN AND THE KNAPSACK HE'D PACKED PREVIOUSLY AND STRODE OUT OF CAMP...

HE TRAVELED SWIFTLY THROUGH THE WOODS, FINALLY REACHING HIS CAR. THE GUN AND THE KNAPSACK AND HIS HUNTING CLOTHES, INCLUDING THE SHOES THAT HAD LEFT TELL-TALE TRACKS AROUND THE CAMP, WERE CAREFULLY DISPOSED OF... ALEX DUMPED THEM INTO A RIVER ON HIS WAY HOME...



I'M RID OF HIM FOR GOOD. EVERYTHING IS MINE NOW. NO ONE KNOWS WE WERE UP HERE TOGETHER. THEY'LL THINK HE WAS ATTACKED BY A MANIAC.



THERE! NOW TO DRIVE BACK TO THE CITY AND SNEAK INTO THE APARTMENT...

ALEX ARRIVED AT HIS APARTMENT BUILDING TOWARD MORNING. HE SLIPPED BACK IN THE SAME WAY HE'D LEFT... THROUGH THE CAVERNOUS CATACOMBS-LIKE CELLAR, WHEN HE REACHED HIS PENTHOUSE DOOR, HE QUIETLY LIFTED THE 'DO-NOT-DISTURB' SIGN FROM THE KNOB...

ALEX SMILED. IT HAD ALL BEEN SO SIMPLE. HE SLIPPED THE KEY INTO THE LOCK AND TURNED IT QUIETLY. THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN. ALEX STEPPED IN. THE DAWN LIGHT WAS JUST BEGINNING TO FILTER THROUGH THE HUGE FRENCH DOORS LEADING OUT ONTO THE BALCONY...



PERFECT! MY ALIBI IS PERFECT! I'VE BEEN IN MY APARTMENT SINCE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON! I'D FELT ILL AND DIDN'T EVEN GO WITH STANLEY ON HIS HUNTING TRIP.



HOW TO GET UNDRESSED AND RING DOWN FOR BREAKFAST. I'LL... I'LL... HUH? SOMEONE'S OUT THERE ... ON THE BALCONY! I... I...

**GOOD LORD!**



THE SILHOUETTE ON THE BALCONY MOVED TOWARD THE FRENCH DOORS... THE EARLY MORNING SUNLIGHT GLEAMING ON THE STEEL BLADE OF THE CLEAVER STUCK IN ITS HEAD...



FEAR AND REVULSION POUNDED DOWN INTO ALEX'S HEAVING STOMACH. HE LIFTED HIS GLENCHED FISTS TO HIS MOUTH, CLOSED HIS EYES AND SCREAMED...



WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES, THE FIGURE ON THE BALCONY WAS GONE. ALEX STARED OUT AT WHERE IT HAD BEEN... SICK... TREMBLING...



THERE WAS A POUNDING ON THE FRONT DOOR. ALEX SPUN AROUND. A VOICE DRIFTED THROUGH...



ALEX LISTENED TO THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE HOUSE-PORTER FADING AWAY DOWN THE HALL. HE HURRIED TOWARD THE BEDROOM...



THE FIGURE STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE BEDROOM FLOOR... ITS GLASSY EYES STARING OUT FROM THE BLOOD-COVERED FACE... THE CLEAVER STICKING AWKWARDLY OUT FROM ITS RENT SKULL...



ALEX COVERED HIS EYES, SHUTTING OUT THE HORRIBLE SIGHT. AND WHEN HE OPENED THEM AGAIN, THE FIGURE WAS GONE...





ALEX UNDERESSED QUICKLY AND SLIPPED INTO HIS PAJAMAS. HE'D JUST FINISHED BUTTDING THEM WHEN THE KNOCK ON THE DOOR ANNOUNCED SAMMY'S RETURN.



ALEX SLIPPED INTO A DRESSING-ROBE AND OPENED THE DOOR.



THE FIGURE STOOD BEHIND SAMMY, GRINNING... ITS EYES WIDE AND BURNING... ITS HEAD TILTED CRAZILY AS IF THE CLEAVER IMBEDDED THERE WAS TOO HEAVY. ALEX CLOSED HIS EYES, TURNING AWAY.



AFTER THE HOUSE-PORTER LEFT, ALEX SAT DOWN AND STARED AT THE UNAPPETIZING FOOD. THERE WAS NO HUNGER IN HIM... NO DESIRE TO EAT. HE'D ONLY ORDERED THE FOOD TO ESTABLISH HIS ALIBI. HE RETCHED AND LOOKED AWAY...



IT STOOD THERE... BLOODY... SWAYING... ITS EYES BULGING... ITS TEETH BARED IN A DEATH-GRIN.



ALEX JAMMED HIS EYES SHUT. WHEN HE OPENED THEM, THE APPARITION WAS GONE.



HE STAGGERED ACROSS THE HUGE LUXURIOUS LIVING-ROOM TO THE WELL-APPOINTED BAR. THE GURG-LING WHISKEY POURING INTO THE GLASS SOUNCED LIKE DISTANT LAUGHTER...





AS HE LIFTED THE GLASS TO HIS LIPS, THE FIGURE STOOD BEFORE HIM... GROTESQUE APPALLING SICKENING



THE LIQUOR BOTTLE SMASHED ON THE POLISHED HARDWOOD FLOOR, ALEX SHUT HIS EYES..



HE OPENED HIS EYES. THE FIGURE GRINNED AT HIM. STUPIDLY BLOODY... THE SHINING CLEAVER WEDGED DEEP IN ITS SKULL...



HE SHUT HIS EYES AGAIN, SHUTTING OUT THE AWFUL SIGHT...



ONE MINUTE PASSED. TWO. ALEX OPENED ONE EYE...



HE CLAMPED THE EYE SHUT AGAIN, WITH HIS EYES SHUT, HE COULDN'T SEE THE HORRIBLE SIGHT. WITH HIS EYES SHUT, HE WAS FREE OF IT. HE WAITED...



HE TURNED WITH SHUT EYES TO THE BAR, FEELING FOR A GLASS, A BOTTLE, KNOCKING THEM OVER, SPILLING, SMASHING. FINALLY, IN DESPERATION, HE OPENED HIS EYES. THE FIGURE WAS BEHIND THE BAR NOW... SMIRKING AT HIM...





IT WAS TORTURE FOR HIM, TRYING TO MOVE ABOUT WITH SHUT EYES... TRYING TO FIND HIS CIGARETTES, A MATCH... TRYING TO SATISFY HIS CRAVINGS... HE COULDN'T HELP OPENING HIS EYES. AND WHEN HE DID, THE FIGURE WAS ALWAYS THERE. FINALLY...



HE SAT WITH THE BLINDFOLD OVER HIS EYES... SAT ALL MORNING AND INTO THE AFTERNOON. SAMMY CAME AND WENT, ALEX REFUSING LUNCH. HE STAGGERED AROUND THE APARTMENT...



HE FELT THE CIGARETTE URN PITCH OVER, DROP TO THE FLOOR. HE WENT TO HIS HANDS AND KNEES, FEELING FOR THEM, CURSING, REACHING, NOT FINDING ONE. FINALLY HE TORE THE BLINDFOLD FROM HIS EYES...



THE FIGURE WAS THERE, LYING ON THE FLOOR, GRINNING UP AT HIM...



HE GOT TO HIS FEET, STUMBLED TOWARD THE KITCHEN. THE FIGURE STOOD BEFORE HIM, BARRING HIS WAY...



WHEREVER HE LOOKED... THE FIGURE. HE RUMMAGED THROUGH KITCHEN DRAWERS...



HE FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR... LIFTED IT IN A WHITE-KNUCKLED TREMBLING FIST...





THE PAIN...THE SCREAMING UNBEARABLE PAIN OF PLUNGING THE ICE PICK...FIRST INTO ONE EYE, THEN INTO THE OTHER...AND THE WELCOME DARKNESS THAT FOLLOWED. SAMMY'S FACE BLANCHED WHITE WHEN HE SAW ALEX KNEELING ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR...BLOOD POURING DOWN HIS CHEEKS LIKE CRIMSON TEARS...

ALEX MUST HAVE FAINTED AFTER THAT...SWALLOWED UP INTO HIS SELF-IMPOSED DARKNESS. HE FLOATED IN IT...HEARING THE FAINT SCREAM OF A DISTANT SIREN...THE MUTTERING OF SUBDUED VOICES...THE SOUND OF A MOTOR...THE SWEET SMELL OF ANESTHETIC...

AND THEN, AN ETERNITY LATER, HE FELT HANDS TOUCHING HIM, MOVING ABOUT HIS BLIND EYES...UNWRAPPING BANDAGES...



HE COULD SEE AGAIN. GOD, THEY HAD MADE HIM SEE. THEY HAD REPAIRED HIS STABBED AND BLEEDING EYES AND HE COULD MAKE OUT THE FIGURE BEFORE HIM...DIM, HAZY, SWAYING...WITH A GLEAMING OBJECT STICKING OUT OF THE CENTER OF ITS HEAD...

STANLEY! HE WOULD ALWAYS SEE STANLEY. THERE WOULD BE NO ESCAPE! NEVER! HERE... HERE IN THIS HOSPITAL ROOM, STANLEY WAS STARING AT HIM...THE MEAT-CLEAVER SHINING IN THE REHT SKULL. ALEX LEAPED FROM THE BED...



THE SPLINTERING OF GLASS...THE FADING SCREAM...THE THUD OF A BODY RUPTURING AND SMASHING AGAINST SOLID CONCRETE TWELVE STORIES BELOW. ALEX HAD SOLVED HIS PROBLEM. THE FIGURE WITH THE SHINING OBJECT IN THE CENTER OF ITS HEAD MOVED TO THE WINDOW AND LOOKED DOWN. THE SUNLIGHT GLINTED UPON HIS HEAD-REFLECTOR AS THE DOCTOR SHRUGGED SADLY...

SO THAT'S MY YARH, KIDDIES. ALEX FINALLY GOT RID OF STANLEY FOR GOOD...BY GETTING RID OF HIMSELF...OITTO. ANYBODY WANT TO BUY A SPLATTERED CORPSE? THERE'S ONE OUTSIDE CITY HOSPITAL. NO? HOW ABOUT ONE WITH A CLEAVER IN ITS HEAD? UPSTATE, NEAR A CAMPING SITE, THERE'S... NO? HUMPH! GHEAP SKATES! WELL...THIS IS C.K., TURNING YOU BACK TO V.K., O.K.?







# THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

President and CEO—Stephen A. Geppi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your comics, they're Da Bomb! You see, my dad told me there was a CRYPT comic book. I got excited! Then one day I went to Atomic Comics and my brother found [some]

A few days later I found VAULT 17 and bought it. I love you and Crypt-Keeper. I hate Old Witch, she's stupid. I also got a CRYPT comic, but your's is better Remember, you're Da Bomb!

Horror Man Mike

Phoenix, AZ

My name is Alex Gray. I am a very big fan of "Notorious 1950s EC Comics" with THE VAULT OF HORROR and TALES FROM THE CRYPT and "The Witch's Cauldron". I am making this letter because I was wondering if you (VAULT) could send me a free copy of VAULT vol. 1. Thank you.

Alex Gray, 18

Elmhurst, IL

The softcover "annual" for \$8.95 made from these comics, or the \$20 hardback archive-like books shot directly from the original art? Either way—no freebies! A ghoul's gotta eat!

-VK

Dear VK,

I'd never read VAULT 20 before. "Easel Kill Ya!" held me in a spell of morbid fascination. The demented deeds of the angry artist can hardly be condoned, yet there is something strangely compelling in the self-realization he undergoes after meeting his beautiful upstairs neighbor. His introspection has a familiar ring of truth to which we can all relate in some small way. Indeed, there is a fine line between love and hate. They aren't so much opposites as they are but two manifestations of human passion.

Far and away my favorite story in this issue is Bradbury's "The Lake". Being a hopeless romantic in a world of sad realities and senseless tragedies, I was very moved by this story (I could try to describe the degree, but I'm sure you'd think I was exaggerating). Oh, and Orlando's art is enchanting. "The Lake" intently ranks as one of my all time favorite EC stories.

Rick Olson

Minneapolis, MN

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your comics! My Mom loves them too! I think The CK sucks! His show has most of your stories on them! My favorite story is "Mask of Horror". Do you read Steven King? I do. Hey could you get Russ to give me a autograph.

Rusty Kelley

Austin, TX

Ahe! First the butter, then the squeeze! Yes, I read King, and occasionally even decode his texts. But I don't have any extra King autographs lying about. Did you know King is actually MY fan? Sure, you did!

-VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

Re: Issue 19, I nitpick below, not unmindful that (having worked under publication deadlines myself) EC churned out material of unprecedented and unsurpassed quality.

"Split Personality" gets into astrophysics (worm-holes mentioned in your intro) and linguistics. Albeit the linguistic allusion is incorrect: telephone clicks aren't silent (sounds like S and Z, for which the sound stream does not completely stop), they are clicks (the articulation of which necessitates a complete stoppage of the sound stream), such as found in some African languages (e.g.: the songs of Meriam Makibo in the 1970s).

In "Who Donut?", an octopus' suckers don't ingest, they merely suck (as do the holes in this story). Nor do they scar the victim, indeed, on fellow cephalopod the squid only the suckers on the two long reaching tentacles (as opposed to the eight grasping tentacles) can inflict scars. Octopi have no reaching tentacles, hence, no way to inflict tentacle scars.

## NEXT ISSUE





In "Practical Choke!", revenge is predicated on the intestinal fortitude of the unidentified victim. This tale is the disembodiment of humor (and vice versa).

"Notes to You!" featured playful language throughout, from alliteration run riot in the Old Witch's intro to the final puns. I found myself wondering who could've written the letters—perhaps...The Killzone?

Re. issue 20: Did the first car crash in "Easel Kill Ya!" involve the suicidal, unnamed artist is kneeling in the middle of the rain-soaked road? In WEIRO SCIENCE, this story could've gotten going good if he was also the driver of the car, and fatally flattened his drenched dop-pelgänger en route to his contemplated suicide, entitling the resulting painting "Don't Tread on Me".

As a side-interest, I started a list of words that have the most repetitions of each letter, with separate categories for dictionary entries and literary constructs (e.g., as found in an EC comic). As the peach-chewing wife says "Gggghhhh" when the poker clobbers her, she ties 'g'ing' (also 4 Gs) and surpasses 'heathenish' (3 Hs). And, as The Old Witch concludes the issue with "S-S-S-S-S-S" (7 Ss), she surpasses 'assesses' (5 Ss). Keep up the good work!

Through No Vault of My Own (I Vault to be Alone),

Bob Gorby

Camarillo, CA

Remember, that was a mechanical rotary dial, not the toylike beep-beep button ubiquitous today!

You are obviously unfamiliar with the peculiar crossbreed octobetapup; half vampire bat, half octopus, half clotheshorse. That's three hehves! He's so big, he can wear an overcoat! -VK

Hello, Again!

Time to review VAULT 19. Magnificent Johnny Craig horror cover: A+!

"Split Personality!" had excellent artwork by Craig and writing by ? tell us! Susan and Amy did kill a guilty honey-tongued @\*!?!m conniving con-man, but he already had a bleached spot on the back of his head (page 7-panel 1) before Susan dabbed a few drops of peroxide on Edwin's hair that night.

"Who Coughed?": Oscar the octopus (I thought it was Calvin calamari).

You mention in your ed in 'Previews' magazine about the characters being familiar in the story "Practical Choke!", one looks like Bill Gaines. Who are the other two guys?

A EC fan's dream come true is the comic book display in Mr. Popkin's candy store in the compelling story "Notes To You!" by Ghostly.

VOH #20, "The Lake"; Tally: Rest In Peace.

David Cellario

Kensington, CT

In "Spill," don't confuse the back with the top of the head! Could be embarrassing! ("Remember, friend, as you pass by...") -VK

I wrote to you previously about the "Vault of Horror" movie, prompted by a letter which appeared in your CRYPT 4. In

regards to the "Tales From The Crypt" flick. But after rereading the letter, I wanted to point out an error in your response.

It is true that the following EC comic adaptations appeared in the "Tales From The Crypt" film (1972): "Reflection Of Oath," "Poetic Justice," "Wish You Were Here," and "Bird Alleys." But, the first segment was not "Collection Completed" as you suggested, it was "And All Through The House" (a grim Yuletide fable in which an escaped homicidal mental patient dons a Santa Claus costume, and stalks Joan Collins in her house, moments after she has slaughtered her hubby!). Just thought that you and your readers might want to know. In which issue does this jolly little Christmas tale appear?

Incidentally, both the "Crypt" and "Vault" movies are superior to the HBO series, in that they capture the subtle but GRUESOME flavor of the classic EC comics. If you don't believe me, just watch Peter Cushing's poignant portrayal of the garbage man in "Poetic Justice," inspired by Graham Ingels' GHASTLY masterpiece (HAUNT #12).

I just received Volume 3 (issues 11-15) of your CRYPT, VAULT, and HAUNT annuals in the mail. "Bargain in Oeath" (CRYPT 12) was a truly GRRRISLY tale (featured in the "Vault of Horror" flick). Keep up the GHQUL work, and tell The Old Witch that I want to jump her decrepit old moldering BONES! Frighthly yours,

Jos Grotenneith II

Alexandria, VA

I think I've since corrected The Crypt-Keeper's (not Russ!) feeble memory and listed full, correct contents for both Amicus films. The Santa fiend will be in our VAULT 24. Are you and The Old Witch playing checkers by mail? -VK

NEXT ISSUE

## AGNES TRIED TO DISCOURAGE MR. HORTON...





And now, purloined letters from the desk of The Crypt-Keeper (he was in the rumpus room watching a video of his HBO show, so I took the liberty):

In CRYPT #18, Julia Ross exposed the fact that a few EC writers occasionally borrowed from authors, such as F. Marion Crawford. Although I cannot verify this additional info, I believe F. Marion Crawford's story, "For the Blood is Life" is also an EC tale. If memory serves me correctly the inspiration became a VAULT tale, "A Bloody Undertaking". Both stories have suspected vampire activity as well as suspicious characters (the suspected vampires). Only at the end of each story does the reader discover the vampires' true identities, a result of the innocents' horrible fates!

Eloise Radice Gilbert, AZ

CK has only one book on his shelf (and he hasn't finished coloring it yet), so I'll have to rely on my readers to confirm or deny. "Undertaking" appears in my VAULT 13.

-VK

Do you hate Vault-Keeper? I hate him. What issue is "The Third Little Pig" in? If you know, can you send me that

My fave stories are "Attacks of Horror", "None But the Lonely Heart" and "By the Fright of the Silvery Moon!" My favorite TV episodes are "The Third Little Pig" and the one where a [?] stays at this guy's house, the guy kills him, chops off his legs, puts him in the coffin and then at the end the guy sees him with crutches and no feet, and he hits the guy with a crow bar. What's that one called? Your friend,

Adam Rotha

No, hot Now, I can but Adam on my 'needs professional help' list! According

to Myron Jemas, "The Third Pig" (correct title) was never an EC story, but an HBO original. The other episode you synopsized could be called "A Typical Day in the Crypt" The other is likely "We Ain't Got No Body!" VAULT 12.

-VK

While vacationing on a tropical beach resort in Malaysia my video camera, wallet and other valuable items were stolen. As you can tell from the police report I naturally listed among the stolen items my most prized possessions - my comic books: 1. CRYPT, 2. VAULT.

Unfortunately the thief is still on the prowl and the spoils were never recovered, but what really gets my gruesome goat is that since comics are so difficult to buy here I never had the chance to read the October issues!!

I guess I'll just have to wait until next year when I visit my brother in Nashville, to read those comics. You see, my brother also loves your lurid tales as much as me (if not more) and has turned a room in his house into a shrine to your comics. You (y'all) may remember his hauntingly, butt-ugly face - you printed his letter and photo of his very own baseball card over 2 years ago. Your friend on the other side of the world,

James P. Bowers Section 17-1 Petaling Jaya Q-B-D Tiara Damansara Apts. Malaysia 46400

You know, The Old Witch vacationed in Asia last year, and came back with tanned nose and toes and sand in her sandals. Do you suppose. . .

-VK

## JAMES' FLIMSY

(Date 11-Feb 2012)

BALAS POLIS

Sape yang ambil report

Waktu dia beritahu report 4:50 pm Sept 28, 1996

Nama (Jenis) Patrick BOWERS 023761929

Jelajah atas perempuan MALE umur 29

Keturunan AMERICAN bahasa English

Pekerjaan Sales Coach pekerja tinggal

Q-B-D Tiara Damansara Apt 25 #35 pendudukan su

Temp 17/1 46700(03)357-2797 46700-46700

Adikan kiam - COMBOUTING

What morning from 12-12 45 pm at the Imperial

Resort left my black bag, ready to travel on the

chair and went for a walk to Club Med

After returning about an hour later I noticed

my black bag was gone, but my jewelry & travel

remained. Contents of black bag:

1. Sharp Video camera

2. Battery charger, battery, 2 video tapes

3. Wallet

A. \$1000.00

B. credit cards (2 video)

C. Malaysia ATM card

D. Driver's license (Jawa's work)

3. Hotel key to 215

4. 2 comic books

A. taken from the closet

B. went to hotel

Julian

Also available this month are WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED TALES. Watch for HAUNT, CRIME and FRONTLINE COMBAT next month. Don't forget HAUNT, FRONTLINE COMBAT and CRIME! Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic).

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, SOLD OUT; FRONT #1-4, \$2 each; all others up thru issue #3, \$1.50 each; CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-16, and VAULT, W FAN, 2 FAN, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, \$2 each. All others, \$2.50 each.

Don't forget the entire 11-issue run of WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-11, \$2 each) and the 16 issues of SHOCK SUSPENSORIES (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-15, \$2.00 each; #16-18, \$2.50 each).

Add \$5 per order (\$10 outside US) for S&H.

We want letters! Write to:

VAULT

GENSTONE

POB 468

WEST PLAINS MO 65775

## THIS COMIC REPRINTS

VAULT OF HORROR "#32" (#21, AUG/SEP 53)

COVER by Johnny Craig

"Whirlpool"

"Out of His Head"

"An Ample Sample"

"Funeral Disease"

Johnny Craig

Jack Davis

George Evans

Graham Ingals

We welcome letters of comment. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We will for clarity accuracy and length. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters. To do so we need your address on the individual letter.



**HERE'S A SWEET TERROR-TALE  
WITH AN APPETIZING WIND-UP!**

# An AMPLE SAMPLE



IRWIN SLAMMED THE FRONT DOOR OF HIS HOUSE WITH A GRUNT OF SATISFACTION AND STEPPED OUT INTO THE TEeming DOWNPOUR THAT PLUMMETED EARTHWARD FROM THE BLACK HEAVENS OVERHEAD. THE RAINDROPS SPLASHED CONCENTRIC RINGS IN THE RAPIDLY FORMING PUDDLES, WATERFALLED OFF THE BOWED-LEAVED SHRUBBERY, AND STREAMED DOWN IRWIN'S FACE, CREATING THE ILLUSION THAT HE WAS CRYING. AS IF TEARS WERE OVERFLOWING FROM HIS EYES. ACTUALLY, IF YOU LOOKED CLOSELY AT IRWIN, YOU COULDN'T REALLY TELL. HE CARRIED A SAW AND HAMMER IN HIS HANDS.



IRWIN CROSSED THE FRONT LAWN AND SLOshed UP THE STEPS TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PORCH OF THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR. HE RANG THE BELL...

WHY, IRWIN? YOU'RE SOAK-  
ING WET! YOU COULDN'T  
HAVE TO RETURN THOSE  
THINGS TONIGHT.

I... I WANTED TO.  
BERT! I'VE FINISHED!  
CARE TO SEE WHAT  
I MADE...?





**IRWIN'S NEIGHBOR HESITATED...**  
WELL, IRWIN, I'D... I'D  
LIKE TO, BUT... THE  
RAIN... I... COULDN'T  
IT WAIT UNTIL  
TOMORROW?

ALL  
RIGHT,  
BERT,  
TOMORROW.



**IRWIN TURNED TO GO. BERT PUT  
OUT HIS HAND, TOUCHING IRWIN'S  
ARM...**  
HOLD ON, IRWIN!  
DON'T FEEL BAD.  
I'LL COME OVER...  
SOON AS THE  
RAIN LETS UP.

WILL YOU,  
BERT? SWEET!  
I'LL WAIT  
HERE WITH  
YOU.



**IRWIN PUSHED PAST BERT, ON INTO  
THE LIVING ROOM... AND SAT DOWN.  
BERT LOOKED AT HIM. THERE WAS  
SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT IRWIN  
TONIGHT, SOMETHING DIFFERENT...**

HOW'S HANNAH,  
IRWIN?

HANNAH? WHY...  
SHE'S FINE!



**IRWIN TURNED AWAY SO THAT BERT WOULDN'T SEE  
THAT THE OROPLETS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHEEKS  
WERE REAL TEARS, THIS TIME...**

WHAT'S **WRONG**, IRWIN?  
YOU'RE NOT **YOURSELF**  
TONIGHT! WHAT'S  
**BOTHERING** YOU?

BERT, I... I...



**IRWIN SIGHED AND SAT BACK IN HIS CHAIR. HIS FACE  
SEEMED TO CLOUD UP DARK, AND HIS EYES HAD A FAR-  
AWAY LOOK ABOUT THEM...**

WILL YOU **LISTEN**, BERT?  
WILL YOU LISTEN TO THE  
**WHOLE STORY?**

**GO AHEAD, OLD MAN.  
GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST!  
YOU'LL FEEL BETTER!**



**IRWIN'S VOICE WAS FULL OF THE SADNESS OF LONG-  
AGO MEMORIES AND OLD SOUVENIRS PACKED AWAY IN  
DUSTY BOXES IN DARK ATTICS. IT WAS TOUCHED WITH  
THE SADNESS OF LOST YOUTH AND A FADING SUMMER,  
WHEN LEAVES DRY AND FALL FROM GREYING TREES...**

LET ME **TELL** YOU ABOUT **HANNAH**, BERT. LET ME  
TELL YOU ABOUT A HANNAH YOU **NEVER KNEW**.  
THE HANNAH I **MARRIED... TEN YEARS AGO...**



**'SHE WAS THIN THEN, BERT. YES, IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE,  
BUT SHE WAS! SHE WASN'T THE MOST BEAUTIFUL  
CREATURE ON EARTH, BUT NEITHER WAS I THE MOST  
HANDSOME. AND I LOVED HER. I REMEMBER OUR WED-  
DINGS...**

WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER  
UNDER THE SIGHT OF GOD, TO JOIN  
TOGETHER THIS MAN AND THIS  
WOMAN IN HOLY MATRIMONY...





'AND I REMEMBER THE DELIGHTFUL THREE-DAY HONEYMOON WE SPENT AT ATLANTIC CITY. IT TOOK ALMOST ALL OF MY SAVINGS...'

I LOVE IT HERE, IRWIN.

TOO BAD WE HAVE TO GO BACK TOMORROW, HANNAH, HONEY.



'MAYBE I NEVER SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN MARRIED ON SO LITTLE MONEY, BERT. MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE WAITED. THE LITTLE I HAD LEFT WENT FOR THE FIRST MONTH'S RENT FOR THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR...'

LIKE IT, HANNAH?

IT'S VERY NICE, IRWIN.



'I WAS MAKING THIRTY A WEEK BACK THEN, BERT. OF COURSE, IN THOSE DAYS, A COUPLE COULD GET ALONG ON THAT... IF THEY SPENT IT WISELY. BUT HANNAH DEVELOPED A VICE A SHORT TIME AFTER WE WERE MARRIED. CANDY!...'

HAVE SOME, IRWIN. TRY THESE! THEY'RE DELICIOUS!

HANNAH! THIS BOX OF CANDY MUST HAVE COST TWO DOLLARS. YOU KNOW WE CAN'T AFFORD IT!



'MAYBE IT WAS ALL MY FAULT, BERT. MAYBE THE CANDY HANNAH CRAVED WAS A SUBSTITUTE FOR A CRAVING OF HERS THAT I, AS HER HUSBAND, COULDN'T SATISFY. ANYWAY, SHE KEPT BUYING IT. BOX AFTER BOX...'

HANNAH! ANOTHER BOX OF CANDY? BUT YOU JUST BOUGHT ONE THREE DAYS AGO.

LOOK, IRWIN. ISN'T THIS A WONDERFUL IDEA? IT'S A WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOX!



SEE! THERE'S A DIAGRAM ON THE BOX-COVER. IT TELLS YOU WHAT KIND OF CANDY EACH ONE IS...

BUT HANNAH! IT'S SO EXPENSIVE!



WATCH, IRWIN! THE DIAGRAM SAYS THIS ONE IS A CARAMEL. SO, I BITE INTO IT AND... SEE... CARAMEL! YOU DON'T HAVE TO GUESS!

OH... HANNAH...



'THE MORE I OBJECTED, THE MORE CANDY HANNAH DEVoured. THAT'S HOW SHE GOT SO FAT, BERT. EATING CANDY...'

HANNAH. I. I NEED SOME SOCKS. MY OLD ONES ARE FALLING APART. I PUT SOME MONEY IN THIS SUGAR BOWL. WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?

I SPENT IT, IRWIN!





'I GOT SO BAD, HANNAH BEGAN TAKING MONEY THAT WE NEEDED FOR NECESSITIES, AND SPENT IT ON HER BLASTED CANDY...'

ANOTHER WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOX. THAT'S THE THIRD THIS WEEK!

THEY'RE MY FAVORITE!

'YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANGUISH I WENT THROUGH, BERT. HANNAH GAINED MORE AND MORE WEIGHT. REMEMBER WHEN YOU MOVED IN?'

THE NAME'S BERT...

IRWIN'S MY NAME, AND THAT'S MY WIFE, HANNAH...

'YOU NEVER KNEW THAT HANNAH HAD ONCE BEEN THIN AND ATTRACTIVE, DID YOU BERT? I NEVER TOLD YOU. I WAS TOO ASHAMED.'

HAVE ONE, BERT. JUST PICK OUT WHAT YOU LIKE FROM THE DIAGRAM

NO THANKS, HANNAH. I'M ON A DIET.

NICE HAVING YOU AS OUR NEW NEIGHBOR, BERT.

'DID YOU KNOW I WORE THE SAME SHABBY OVERGOAT FOR SEVEN YEARS, BERT, BECAUSE I COULDN'T AFFORD TO BUY A NEW ONE?'

HANNAH! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS. YOU'RE SPENDING ALMOST TEN DOLLARS A WEEK ON CANDY!

I LIKE IT! WHAT ELSE HAVE I GOT IN LIFE?

I NEED A NEW OVERGOAT, HANNAH. WINTER'S COMING ON, AND THERE'S NO WARMTH LEFT IN MINE!

SAVE UP OUT OF YOUR LUNCH MONEY, BUSTER. I TAKE CARE OF MY NEEDS OUT OF MY ALLOWANCE. YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR NEEDS OUT OF YOURS!

BUT I GIVE YOU MY WHOLE SALARY, HANNAH. I ONLY GET THREE DOLLARS A WEEK FOR GARFANE AND LUNCH MONEY.

EAT SMALLER LUNCHES...

'SHE WAS UNREASONABLE, BERT. WHEN I GOT MY RAISE, I DIDN'T TELL HER. I COULDN'T! I WAS WEARING SHIRTS WITH FRAYED COLLARS... TIES THAT WOULDN'T DRY-CLEAN... WORN-OUT SHOES. I SAVED THE EXTRA FIVE DOLLARS I GOT EACH WEEK AND HID IT FROM HER...'

HANNAH!



SHE FOUND THE MONEY, BERT. TODAY, WHILE I WAS AT WORK, SHE FOUND IT...



TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS, TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS THAT I WAS SAVING FOR CLOTHES... CLOTHES I NEED BADLY, AND SHE SPENT IT! ALL OF IT!



SHE BOUGHT FOUR FIVE-POUND WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOXES, BERT. FOUR OF THEM...



HANNAH? HOW COULD YOU?

I'M SET FOR TWO WEEKS, IRWIN!

I SAW RED, BERT! SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ME. I FELT FUNNY AND MY HEART STARTED RACING WILDLY AND THERE WAS A HEAT IN MY BODY THAT RUSHED MADLY AROUND, BURNING OUTWARD IN MY HANDS... MY FACE. I LOOKED AT THE HALF-FINISHED WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOX WITH ITS DIAGRAM, AND THE OTHER BOXES AND...

IRWIN! DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!

HANNAH...  
HANNAH...



IRWIN'S VOICE TRAILED OFF INTO A CHOKING SOB. BERT SHIFTED UNCOMFORTABLY...WAITING. THERE WAS A MOMENT OF SILENCE...

IRWIN. IRWIN. WHAT DID YOU NEED THE HAMMER FOR...THE SAW?

I MADE SOMETHING, BERT. SOMETHING FOR HANNAH!



BERT SHIVERED. HE FELT SUDDENLY FRIGHTENED. THE FEAR SWEEPED OVER HIM, TURNING HIS STOMACH INTO A TIGHT KNOT OF APPREHENSION...

THAT'S... THAT'S BLOOD ON YOUR SHIRT, IRWIN.

UH-HUH.



IRWIN STARED OUT AT THE WET STREETS. THE RAIN HAD STOPPED...

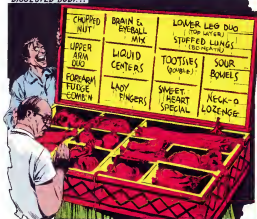
I MURDERED HER, BERT! HANNAH! I MURDERED HER!







IT WAS A *SAMPLE-BOX*, ALL RIGHT. JUST LIKE THE *WHITEMAN* *SAMPLE-BOXES* HANNAH HAD LOVED SO DEARLY. ONLY *THIS* BOX WAS TOO *HUGE* TO HOLD *CANDY*. THIS BOX WAS *JUST RIGHT* FOR THE GORY *SAMPLES* IT DID HOLD. AND THE *DIAGRAM* CRUDELY SCRAWLED ON THE INSIDE OF ITS OPEN COVER IDENTIFIED AND DENOTED THE EXACT LOCATION OF *EACH SEGMENT* OF HANNAH'S *DISMEMBERED* AND *DISSECTED BODY*...



HEH, HEH. AND THAT'S MY *SWEET-STORY* FOR *THIS* ISSUE, KIDDIES. IRWIN'S IN A *PAGGED CELL* NOW, PICKING THE *BUTTONS* OFF THE *PADDING* AND *POPPING* THEM INTO HIS *MOUTH*, AND WITH *EACH ONE*, HE *SCREAMS* 'GAREMEL!' BUT THE *GUARDS* JUST *PEER* IN THROUGH THE *LITTLE GLASS WINDOW* IN THE *DOOR*, MAKE SURE HE'S NOT *GHOKING* TO *DEATH*, AND *SHAKE* THEIR *HEADS*. THEY NEVER *SAW* A *GUY* SO *CRAZY* OVER *CANDY*! NOW THE *OLD WITCH* *AWAITS* WITH HER *GRUESOME GRUEL*. I CAN *SMELL* IT FROM *HERE*, SO... *GROOPS, HA-YEN-SHUN!* *HOLD... NOSE! EYES... RIGHT!*





# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE. SO IT'S WIND-UP TIME IN V.K.'S MAG AGAIN, AND I'M THE GAL WHAT CAN DO IT UP BROWN. SO, WELCOME TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, FIENDS. THIS IS YOUR CREEPS-COOK, THE OLD WITCH, READY WITH ANOTHER REEKING RECIPE. HUNGRY FOR HORROR? GOOD! THEN FEAST ON THE YOWL-YARN I CALL...

## FUNEREAL DISEASE!

ON NIGHTS WHEN THE WIND SWEEPED OVER THE FAIRCHILD ESTATE AND SCREAMED THROUGH THE TREES AND WHISTLED AROUND THE LUXURIOUS MAIN-HOUSE... WHEN ITS CHILL GREPT INTO HIS AGED BRITTLE BONES, WARNING HIM OF HIS APPROACHING INEVITABLE DEATH... OLD JASPER MILLIKEN WOULD SIT IN HIS SPARSELY FURNISHED GARDENER'S COTTAGE AND COUNT THE NEAT STACK OF WRINKLED BILLS THAT HE'D SAVED THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE...

4950... 4960... 4970...  
ONLY THIRTY DOLLARS  
MORE TO GO. AND MR.  
FAIRCHILD OWES ME MORE  
THAN THAT ALREADY...



BUT ON ONE PARTICULAR NIGHT, WHILE OLD JASPER, THE GARDENER, SMILED AND SIGHED AND PONDLED AND ADMIRER HIS SAVINGS, AND THOUGHT ABOUT THE LIFE-LONG DREAM HIS MONEY WOULD FINALLY FULFILL, HIS EMPLOYER, NILES FAIRCHILD, SAT AT HIS DESK IN THE HUGE BOOK-LINED LIBRARY IN THE MAIN HOUSE AND LISTENED TO THE SAD VOICE OF HIS PERSONAL ACCOUNTANT, TOM KELTON...

THAT'S THE STORY, NILES. YOU'RE MORTGAGED TO THE HILT! THEY'VE ALL REFUSED YOU MORE CREDIT UNTIL YOU PAY WHAT YOU OWE! YOU'RE FACING BANKRUPTCY... A JAIL SENTENCE! AND I CAN'T HELP YOU WITH ANOTHER DIME!

AND YOU SAY THAT \$5,000 COULD TIDE ME OVER...?







**\$5,000 COULD SWING IT! YOU COULD ESTABLISH CREDIT ONCE MORE... FILL THAT GOVERNMENT ORDER... AND YOU'D BE IN BUSINESS AGAIN!**

**TOM, I KNOW YOU'RE IN THIS FOR ABOUT \$15,000... BUT... COULDN'T YOU POSSIBLY...?**



**NOT A DIME, NILES! I HAVEN'T GOT IT! I'D LOVE TO HELP! LDRD KNOWS, I'D LIKE TO RECOUP WHAT I'VE SUNK INTO THIS DEAL... BUT I'M BROKE! **FLAT BROKE!****

**WHERE, TOM? WHERE CAN I RAISE \$5,000? I'VE TAPPED EVERY SOURCE I HAD!**



**I DON'T KNOW, NILES! I JUST DON'T KNOW!**

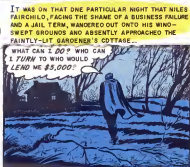
**THEN IT'S PRISON AND RUIN FOR ME.**



**THE ACCOUNTANT, TOM KELTON, NODDED...**

**THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT, NILES. AND FIFTEEN GRAND OF MY OUGH GOES DOWN THE DRAIN, ISN'T THERE ANYBODY TOM? ANYBODY YOU KNOW WHO COULD LEND YOU FIVE GRAND?**

**NO ONE, TOM! NOT A SOUL!**



**IT WAS ON THAT ONE PARTICULAR NIGHT THAT NILES FAIRCHILD, FACING THE SHAME OF A BUSINESS FAILURE AND A JAIL TERM, WANDERED OUT ONTO HIS WIND-SWEPT GROUNDS AND ABSENTLY APPROACHED THE FAINTLY-LIT GARDENER'S COTTAGE...**

**WHAT CAN I DO? WHO CAN I TURN TO WHO WOULD LEND ME \$5,000?**



**THE STARS WERE COLD AND THE MOON WAS COLD AND THE TREES GRUNTED AND SWAYED, WHISPERING WITH THE WIND. AND NILES FAIRCHILD PASSED OLD JASPER'S DINGY COTTAGE AND LOOKED THROUGH THE UNCURTAINED WINDOW, AND HE SAW THE OLD MAN COUNTING THE NEAT STACK OF WRINKLED BILLS...**

**GOOD LORD!**



**OLD JASPER STARTED AS THE HEAVY KNOCKING ECHOED THROUGH HIS CABIN. WHO COULD THAT BE THIS TIME OF NIGHT? WHO WOULD VISIT HIM... A LOWLY GARDENER? HE HAD THE MONEY HASTILY...**

**JUST A MINUTE! WHO... WHO IS IT?**

**IT'S ME, JASPER! MR. FAIRCHILD!**



THE OLD MAN SWUNG THE DOOR WIDE. MR. FAIRCHILD SMILED DOWN AT HIM...



I CAME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE WAGES I OWE YOU, JASPER! MAY I COME IN?

OF COURSE, MR. FAIRCHILD! PLEASE COME IN...

NILES FAIRCHILD'S GLANCE DARTED AROUND THE DIMLY LIT COTTAGE. THE MONEY WAS GONE... HIDDEN, HE SAT DOWN. HE WEIGHED HIS WORDS CAREFULLY...



I'M... I'M IN A BIT OF TROUBLE, JASPER. FINANCIAL TROUBLE! I WON'T GO INTO IT BECAUSE IT'S A LITTLE TOO COMPLICATED FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND, BUT... WELL... I CAN'T PAY YOU THIS MONTH!

CAN'T PAY ME, MR. FAIRCHILD? BUT...

IN FACT, JASPER, I FACE BANKRUPTCY... RUIN... AND A POSSIBLE JAIL SENTENCE IF I DON'T RAISE \$5,000 WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS...

\$5000. THAT'S A LOT OF MONEY!

LEND IT TO ME, JASPER! I BEG OF YOU! I KNOW YOU HAVE IT. I SAW YOU COUNTING IT! PLEASE LEND IT TO ME!

NO! NO!

IT CAN SAVE ME, JASPER! YOU'LL GET IT BACK... ALL OF IT... I SWEAR IT!

NO! I'VE SAVED ALL MY LIFE TO GET THAT MONEY! I WON'T GIVE IT UP NOW. I'M OLD! I'LL BE NEEDING IT SOON!



FOR WHAT? WHAT WOULD AN OLD MAN WANT WITH THAT KIND OF MONEY?

A FUNERAL, MR. FAIRCHILD! A DIGNIFIED FUNERAL... WITH FLOWERS AND A SILVER GASKET AND PALL-BEARERS AND A SERMON AND ORGAN MUSIC. I'VE SAVED ALL MY LIFE FOR MY FUNERAL...

MY GOD, MAN! WHAT GOOD IS A BIG FUNERAL TO YOU... AFTER YOU'RE DEAD?

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, MR. FAIRCHILD! YOU COULDN'T! BUT I REMEMBER MY FATHER'S FUNERAL... AND MY MOTHER'S FUNERAL...





OLD JASPER WENT TO THE WINDOW. HE POINTED OUT INTO THE HOWLING NIGHT...

MY FATHER WAS GARDENER HERE BEFORE ME. HE NEVER HAD ANY MONEY. NEVER COULD SAVE ANY. WHEN MY MOTHER DIED, SHE WAS BURIED OUT THERE...

FAR ACROSS THE FAIRCHILD ESTATE, THE WIND TOSSED LEAVES AGAINST A STATELY MARBLE EDIFICE... THE FAIRCHILD FAMILY CRYPT... THEN SPUN AROUND, AND SKIPPED OVER THE SHABBY GRAVES IN THE SIMPLE LITTLE CEMETERY BESIDE IT...

...OUT THERE... IN YOUR PRIVATE POTTER'S FIELD. YOUR SERVANTS' CEMETERY.

OLD JASPER'S VOICE WAS SAD... LIKE A CHILD WHO'D CRIED TOO LOUD AND TOO LONG...

I REMEMBER HOW THEY CAME TO THIS COTTAGE AND LIFTED HER FROM THE BED AND DUMPED HER INTO A PINE BOX AND HAULED IT OUT THERE AND DROPPED IT INTO THE YAWNING HOLE AND FILLED IT UP AND IT WAS ALL OVER. SIMPLE. SIMPLE. QUICK. NOTHING.

'AND I REMEMBER HOW I STOOD THERE, AND WATCHED THEM SHOVEL THE SOFT EARTH UPON MY MOTHER'S COFFIN AND HOW I SWORE THAT I WOULD NEVER LET IT HAPPEN TO MY FATHER WHEN HIS TIME CAME...'

'I WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD THEN. I STARTED TO SAVE. WHEN I WAS EIGHTEEN, I'D RUN ENOUGH ERRANDS AND DID ENOUGH ODD JOBS TO AMASS THE 'HUGE' SUM OF ONE HUNDRED AND SIX DOLLARS. AND THIS MY FATHER FOUND ONE NIGHT...'

'AND WENT OUT AND GOT DRUNK AND WAS ROBBED AND MURDERED...'

'AND SO HE, TOO, WAS PUT IN A PLAIN PINE BOX, AND DROPPED IN A HOLE OUT THERE, AND COVERED UP, WITH NO POMP... NO CARE. ONLY THE SOBBING OF AN EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD SON...'



'YOUR FATHER WAS GOOD ENOUGH TO GIVE ME MY FATHER'S JOB. I BECAME THE GARDENER. AND ONE DAY YOUR FATHER DIED, YOU WERE ONLY A BOY. WHAT A FUNERAL HE HAD. THE COFFIN, LYING IN STATE THE FLOWERS.'



'...THE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE COMING TO THE HOUSE, PASSING THE COFFIN, AND SHEDDING TEARS UPON IT...



'...AND THE SERMON, HIS EULOGY, THE ORGAN MUSIC... THE DIGNITY AND GLORIOUS SOLEMNITY OF IT ALL...'



'...THE PALL-BEARERS WITH THEIR WHITE GLOVES CARRYING THE SOLID SILVER GASKET OUT TO THE MARBLE FAMILY CRYPT...THE ORGAN MUSIC DRIFTING OVER THE GROUNDS...THE MOURNERS FOLLOWING... AND I, OFF TO THE SIDE, THINKING OF MY MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S FUNERALS...



AND SO I'VE SAVED, MR FAIRCHILD! I'VE SAVED FOR A DECENT FUNERAL OF MY OWN AND I WON'T GIVE IT UP. NOT TO YOU...NOT TO ANYBODY! NO, MR FAIRCHILD, I WON'T LEND YOU MY MONEY. I WON'T...

I... I UNDERSTAND, JASPER. I'M... SORRY...



IT WAS MUCH LATER ON THAT PARTICULAR NIGHT THAT TWO FIGURES MOVED ACROSS THE FAIRCHILD ESTATE-GROUNDS TO THE GARDENER'S COTTAGE. TWO FIGURES, THAT WHISPERED SOFTLY...

NO ONE KNOWS HE HAS THE MONEY. HE'S OLD, IT WILL LOOK LIKE A HEART-ATTACK...

AND WE'LL BE OFF THE HOOK. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO STRAIGHTEN THINGS OUT AND I'LL BE ABLE TO RECOUP MY \$15,000.



THE PILLOW CAME CRASHING DOWN ON OLD JASPER'S FACE...SNUFFING OUT THE AIR...SNUFFING OUT HIS LIFE.

HE'S... DEAD!

I'VE GOT THE MONEY. LET'S GO...





AND SO, LIKE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER BEFORE HIM, HIS DEATH CERTIFICATE SIGNED BY A DISINTERESTED DOCTOR THAT HAD BEEN HASTILY SUMMONED... OLD JOSEPH WAS PLACED IN A SIMPLE PINE BOX, CARRIED OUT TO THE SERVANT-LOT, AND BURIED WITHOUT FLOWERS, WITHOUT MUSIC, WITHOUT POMP OR DIG-NITY. AND NILES FAIRCHILD AND TOM KELTON STOOD BY, SMILING...



AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, NILES FAIRCHILD WAS ABLE TO REESTABLISH HIS CREDIT, FILL THE GOVERNMENT ORDER, AND START THE LONG CLIMB BACK UP THE FINANCIAL SUCCESS-LADDER. ONE NIGHT, MONTHS LATER...

THAT'S IT, NILES... THE FIRST BLACK-INKED ENTRY! YOU'RE ALL CLEAR! I CAME OVER TONIGHT TO SHOW IT TO YOU! I KNEW YOU'D BE THRILLED...

I AM, TOM. THANKS. HOW ABOUT A DRINK... IN CELEBRATION.



OUTSIDE THE FAIRCHILD MANSION, OUT IN THE DISMAL UNPRETENTIOUS SERVANT-CEMETERY, BELOW THE SPARSELY-GRASSED MOUNDS, SOMETHING STIRRED... PUSHING UPWARD... CRUMBLING THE SURFACE OF IT'S RECENTLY TAMPED-DOWN GRAVE...



INSIDE, THE TWO MEN DRANK, TOM KELTON TURNED TO GO...

GOOD-NIGHT, NILES. 'NIGHT, TOM.



THE THING STUMBLED ACROSS THE LAWN, TOTTERING IN THE WIND, LIFTING ITS MAGGOT-COVERED HEAD, LISTENING...

SEE YOU IN THE MORNING. SURE THING...



NILES FAIRCHILD CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND TOM KELTON AND RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY. AS HE OPENED THE DOOR, THE STENCH OF ROTTED FLESH AND GRAVE-SLIME SEARED HIS NOSTRILS...



WHAT THE...? WHO'S IN HERE? WHO...?

THE THING MOVED FROM THE SHADOWS INTO THE LIGHT. NILES FAIRCHILD SAW IT... SAW THE CRAWLING GRAY-ING CORPSE... SAW THE BITS OF DEAD FLESH FALLING AWAY... THE WHITENED BONE PROTRUDING THROUGH...



NO! NO! OH, LORD...

... AND NILES FAIRCHILD SCREAMED...



THE POLICE, SUMMONED BY THE SERVANTS, FOUND THE BEATEN BLOODY BODY OF NILES FAIRCHILD LYING ON THE LIBRARY FLOOR...



MR. KELTON SAW HIM LAST...  
MR. KELTON DID IT...

TOM KELTON WAS ARRESTED. HE HAD NO DEFENSE. HE'D BEEN THERE. HE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE LITTLE GRAVE OUT IN THE SERVANT-CEMETERY THAT HAD OPENED AND CLOSED THAT NIGHT...



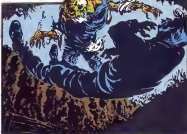
THE SAME LITTLE GRAVE THAT OPENED ONCE MORE THE NIGHT BEFORE NILES FAIRCHILD'S CLOSED-COFFIN FUNERAL SERVICES WERE HELD... OPENED, YAWNING TO ERUPT THE THING...



THE THING TOTTERED ACROSS THE GROUNDS... INTO THE HOUSE... TO THE SOLID SILVER COFFIN... PUSHED OPEN THE LID...



...AND CARRIED THE BODY OF NILES FAIRCHILD BACK TO THE SERVANT-CEMETERY... TO THE OPEN GRAVE... AND DROPPED IT IN...



THE NEXT DAY, THE MOURNERS GATHERED. THE FLOWERS FILLED THE MUNDION-ROOM WITH THEIR SWEET SCENT. THE ORBAIN MUSIC DRIFTED THROUGH THE HOUSE. THE EULOGY WAS SPOKEN. THE PALL-BEARERS LIFTED THE SOLID SILVER COFFIN. THE REMAINS OF OLD JASPER WILLIKEN, GARDENER, WERE CARRIED OUT AND LAID TO REST IN THE MARBLE CRYPT...



HEE, HEE! SO JASPER GOT THE FUNERAL HE'D ALWAYS WANTED. HE WAS SO HAPPY HE DIDN'T EVEN MIND THAT EVERY TIME THEY MENTIONED THE DEAR DEPARTED, THEY REFERRED TO HIM AS NILES. AS FOR TOM KELTON, WELL, HE'S STILL DOING ACCOUNTING WORK... A-COUNTING WITH CHALK-MARKS ON HIS GELL WALL THE DAYS LEFT TILL HE HAS TO SIT IN THE HOT-SEAT. HEE, HEE. 'BYE, NOW. WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY WAG, THE HAUNT OF FEAR!





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NO. 33  
OCT.-NOV.



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# THE VAULT OF

# HORROR

FEATURING...



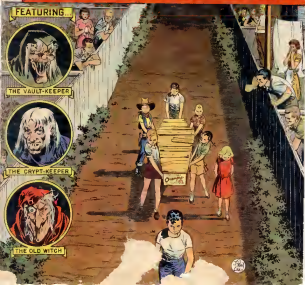
THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH





WELL, IF  
YOU SAY YOU  
CAN'T FIND  
**MAD**  
ANYWHERE?

100

**IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND  
'MAD' ON YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND:**

- or... (2) look harder! It may be at the bottom of the pile  
or... (3) Ask your dealer to send threatening letters to  
his wholesaler demanding **MAD**...  
or... (2) Send the attached subscription coupon which  
gets you 60¢ worth of comic books for 75¢...  
or... (1) Give up the whole business and spend your  
dime on something worth while!

**H**

ENTERTAINING COMEDY GROUP  
125 LAURETTE STREET, ROOM 104  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10014

Theresa spent my last night, the night of **MSD** (ended in strong mental anguish) for which I received **PSD**.

\_\_\_\_\_

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Lafayette St., New York 10, N. Y. William M. Graham (MBA)  
member of the Post Office at New York, N. Y. One young  
H. H. Kelley (member) resided 1910-1911 at 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823,

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# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! HELLO AGAIN, LITTLE HORROR FIELDS.  
WELCOME ONCE MORE TO MY BECKING RAB, THE VAULT  
OF HORROR. I'M ALL SET TO START THE GRAVE ROLL-  
ING WITH ANOTHER TERROR-TALE FROM MY CREEPY  
COLLECTION. I CALL THIS BRAND NEW GRIEFLY GEN  
OF SHREKING SHERMANBANS...



## TOGETHER THEY LIE!

JOHN  
MORROW

OVERHEAD, THE SKY IS A DENSE GREY. A Distant RUMBLE OF THUNDER SEEMS TO MUTTER THE THREAT OF A  
COMING STORM. THERE IS A DEATH-SILENCE HANGING OVER THE CEMETERY, BROKEN ONLY BY THE PITIFUL DOBBING OF  
BLACK-DRAPED AGNES WHETLEY, THE DECEASED MAN'S HOUSEKEEPER. SHE STARES AT THE FOOT OF THE WAK-  
ING GRAVE, HER FACE BURIED IN HER HANDSCHEF. THE OTHER MOURNERS SHIFT UNCOMFORTABLY, WATCHING  
THE BRANCHCISBERS STEP FORWARD AND BEGIN SHOVELING THE CAMP EARTH BACK INTO THE EXCAVATION UPON THE  
SIMPLE COFFIN. AN ODDLY SHAPED HEADSTONE RESTS NEARBY, THE GATE OF DEATH RECENTLY CARVED INTO ITS  
WEATHERED SURFACE.

COME, NOW! IT IS DONE!  
COME AWAY...

NO... SOO. LET ME..  
SOO...STAY A WHILE...





TOUGHEN SCENE, EH, KIDDS?"  
TUNE AT YOUR HARD-HEART STUNNED,  
EHC WANT TO KNOW WHY AGNES  
WHEATLEY STANDS BEFORE HER  
FORMER EMPLOYER'S GRAVE, AND  
BOGS HER EYES OUT? WELL,  
HERE'S THE STORY...



ALEX HORTON LEAPED FROM HIS BED AND RAN WILDLY  
OUT OF HIS PALATIAL MANSION TOWARDS THE ROARING  
INFERNO, MRS. WHEATLEY FOLLOWING...

ARE YOU SURE, AGNES? ARE  
YOU SURE SHE'S IN THERE?  
OH, LORD...

I'M POSITIVE,  
MR. HORTON!



LATER, WHEN THE AGNES HAD  
COOLED, THE FIREMEN PRISHED THE  
LEVELLED REMAINS...

SHE WAS IN THERE,  
ALL RIGHT, MR. HORTON.  
THEY'RE BURNING  
HER BODY OUT NOW,  
I SUGGEST YOU DON'T  
LOOK...

NO! NO!  
I MUST  
SEE HER!  
I MUST.



IT BEGAN ONE NIGHT ON THE HORTON ESTATE WHERE AGNES WHEATLEY  
WAS EMPLOYED AS HOUSEKEEPER. IT BEGAN WITH AN ORANGE GLOW IN  
THE NIGHT SKY... A FIRE, RAGING IN WILDLY LEAPING AND CRACKLING,  
CONSUMING THE BOAT-HOUSE DOWN BY THE LAKE...

MR. HORTON? MR. HORTON? WAKE  
UP! QUICKLY! OH, LORD! THE  
BOAT-HOUSE! IT'S ON FIRE! IT'S  
BURNING! AND MRS. HORTON... IS  
INSIDE! BOB, BOB...

WHAT? HUNT MRS.  
HORTON? WHERE? THE  
BOAT-HOUSE... BURNING?  
MY GOD! SYLVIA!



BY THE TIME ALEX REACHED THE BOAT-HOUSE, THERE  
WAS NOTHING THAT COULD BE DONE... NOTHING EXCEPT  
WATCH THE FLAMES LEVEL IT TO A PILE OF SMOL-  
DERING BLACKENED RUBB...

SYLVIA...  
BOB...

HEAVEN HELP  
HER...



AGNES TRIED TO DISCOURAGE MR.  
HORTON...

PLEASE, MR. HORTON,  
DON'T TORTURE YOUR-  
SELF. REMEMBER HER  
AS SHE WAS. NOT... NOT  
LIKE THIS...

I MUST  
SEE HER...



...AND SO FOR THE LAST TIME,  
MR. HORTON GAZED UPON THE  
CHARRED REMAINS OF HIS BELOVED  
WIFE...

GHORE... SYLVIA...  
BOB...

COME, MR.  
HORTON, COME  
AWAY...





TOUCHING SCENE, EH, KIDDIEST? TUES AT YOUR HARD-HEART STUNNO, EH? WANT TO KNOW WHY AINNO WHEATLEY STANDS BEFORE HER FORMER EMPLOYER'S GRAVE, AND SOBS HER EYES OUT? WELL, HERE'S THE STORY...



ALEX HORTON LEAPED FROM HIS BED AND RAN WILDLY OUT OF HIS PALATIAL MANSION TOWARDS THE ROARING INFERNO, MRS. WHEATLEY FOLLOWING...

IT BEGAN ONE NIGHT ON THE HORTON ESTATE WHERE AINNO WHEATLEY WAS EMPLOYED AS HOUSEKEEPER. IT BEGAN WITH AN ORANGE GLOW IN THE NIGHT SKY... A FIRE... RAMPAGING WILDLY, LEAPING AND CRACKLING, CONSUMING THE BOAT-HOUSE DOWN BY THE LAKE...

MR. HORTON? MR. HORTON? WAKE UP! SQUIGGLY! OH, LORD! THE BOAT-HOUSE? IT'S ON FIRE! IT'S BURNING! AND MRS. HORTON... IS INSIDE! SOB... SOB...

WHAT? HUNT MRS. HORTON? WHERE? THE BOAT-HOUSE... BURNING? MY GOD! SYLVIA!



BY THE TIME ALEX REACHED THE BOAT-HOUSE, THERE WAS NOTHING THAT COULD BE DONE... NOTHING EXCEPT WATCH THE FLAMES LEVEL IT TO A PILE OF SMOLDERING BLACKENED RUBB...

ARE YOU SURE, AINNO? ARE YOU SURE SHE'S IN THERE? OH, LORD...

I'M POSITIVE, MR. HORTON!



SYLVIA... SOB...

HEAVEN HELP HER...



LATER, WHEN THE AINNOES HAD COOLED, THE FIREMEN PROBED THE LEVELLED REMAINS...

SHE WAS IN THERE, ALL RIGHT, MR. HORTON. THEY'RE BURNING HER BODY OUT NOW. I SUGGEST YOU DON'T LOOK...

NO! NO! I MUST SEE HER! I MUST!



AINNO TRIED TO DISCOURAGE MR. HORTON...

PLEASE, MR. HORTON, DON'T TORTURE YOURSELF. REMEMBER HER AS SHE WAS, NOT... NOT LIKE THIS...

I MUST SEE HER!



...AND SO FOR THE LAST TIME, MR. HORTON GAZED UPON THE CHARRED REMAINS OF HIS BELOVED WIFE...

PHONE... SYLVIA... SOB...

COME, MR. HORTON. COME AWAY...





ALEX HORTON HAD BEEN A DEVOTED HUSBAND. HE'D LOVED HIS WIFE DEARLY. HE'D TAKEN HER LOSS VERY HARD, SHUTTING HIMSELF AWAY FROM HIS BUSINESS, HIS FRIENDS, THE WORLD, TO MOURN HER. AGNES WHEATLEY TRIED HER BEST TO COMFORT HIM...



IN LIFE, ALEX HAD BEEN LOATH TO LEAVE SYLVIA'S SIDE... EVEN FOR THE SHORT BUSINESS TRIPS HE'D BEEN FORCED TO MAKE. AFTER HER DEATH, HE'D ORDERED A SPECIAL GRAVESTONE...



THE DOUBLE MONUMENT HAD BEEN EXECUTED WITH SYLVIA'S NAME, BIRTH-DATE AND DEATH-DATE INSCRIBED ON THE RIGHT... AND ALEX'S NAME AND BIRTH-DATE ON THE LEFT WITH A BLANK SPACE FOR HIS DEATH-DATE...



AND EVERY SUNDAY, AGNES WOULD ACCOMPANY MR. HORTON TO THE CEMETERY AND STAND AND WATCH HIM PLACE FLOWERS BEFORE THE HYDE DOUBLE STONE AND LISTEN TO HIS SAD WHISPER...



ONE NIGHT, MITCH FAIRCHILD VISITED ALEX. MITCH WAS THE HORTON'S LAWYER...



I'LL GIVE YOU A BIRD IN A DAY OR SO. I'LL PROBABLY GIVE IT ALL TO SOME CHARITY, NOW. IT DOESN'T MATTER ANY MORE...



AGNES OPENED THE DOOR FOR MITCH WHEN HE WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE. ALEX NEVER NOTICED THE LOOK THAT PASSED BETWEEN THEM.





IT WAS ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY AT THE CEMETERY THAT ALEX BROKE DOWN. SHE'D BEEN WATCHING HER EMPLOYER, LISTENING TO HIS SAD VOICE, AND FINALLY, SHE HUST OUT CRYING...



ALEX STARED AT HIS HOUSEBOY'S FEET.



ALEX OPENED HER POCKETBOOK. SHE PULLED OUT A LETTER.



ALEX READ THE LETTER WITH TEAR-FILLED EYES...





ALEX READ THE LETTER OVER AGAIN AND AGAIN, UNBELIEVABLY...

DON'T YOU SEE? THEY MEANT TO KILL YOU!

OH... NO...



AGNES'S VOICE WAS FILLED WITH HATE...

ONLY SHE *BOINED* IT ALL... THAT NIGHT SHE *DIED*. THEY'D BEEN TOGETHER AS USUAL... DRINKING AND...*SOB*...



"ONLY, WHEN MITCH LEFT, SHE CONTINUED TO DRINK, INSTEAD OF BREAKING BACK TO THE HOUSE AS I'D WATCHED HER DO SO MANY TIMES BEFORE. SHE PASSED OUT, HOOKING OVER THE KEROSENE LAMP."



"I WATCHED THE KEROSENE POOL BURN OUT OVER THE RAIL. WATCHED THE FLAMES LEAP UPON IT, SWEEP THROUGH THE ROOM..."



I COULD HAVE SAVED HER... BUT I...*SOB*... I LET HER DIE! SHE DESERVED IT... *SOB*... SHE WAS NO GOOD, AND SHE *DON'T* DESERVE YOUR GRIEF...

AGNES! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY! THIS... THIS IS SUCH A SHOCK TO ME!



I'VE BEEN A GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT TO YOU, MR. HORTON. IF, IF YOU WANT, YOU CAN TURN ME OVER TO THE POLICE. I'VE GONE WILD, I SWEAR.

NO, AGNES! YOU *ARE* RIGHT. IT'S JUST THAT I WAS SO BLIND... SO VERY BLIND.



THAT NIGHT, ALEX HORTON RETURNED TO THE CEMETERY WHERE SYLVIA LAY BURIED. HE CARRIED WITH HIM A CHISEL AND MALLET. SAYABEET, HE SPLIT THE DOUBLE GRAVESTONE IN TWO.





...AND SO, IN GRATITUDE,  
I LEAVE ALL OF MY ESTATE  
TO MISS AGNES WHEATLEY,  
WHO, THROUGH THE YEARS, HAS  
PROVEN HERSELF...



I'M SORRY TO DISTURB YOU AT THIS HOUR.

OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MR. HORTON. I'M



SOME AGES...  
IT'S ALL OVER.

THE REST OF YOU CAN DO, LET  
ME STAY A WHILE...



GO AHEAD, ALL OF YOU  
I'LL STAY WITH HER...

BOB... BOB...



THEY'VE ALL GONE





AGNES LIFTS HER HEAD... A BROAD SMILE ON HER FACE...



WE'RE **AGIN**, BARRY...

I'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO YOU, AGNES!

HE TELL FOR THAT STORY? SPUN HIM ABOUT HIS WIFE BEING UNFAITHFUL...



WE AGED TO DO SOMETHING THE FOOL WHO GOING TO LEAVE THE DOUGH TO CHARITTY!

AND ALL OF OUR WORK WOULD HAVE BEEN WASTED! WE WOULD'VE TIED HER UP AND CHARGED HER DOWN TO THE BOAT-HOUSE AND SET FIRE TO IT FOR NOTHING! KILLED HER FOR NOTHING!



BUT, HOW DID YOU CONVINCE HIM? YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANY PROOF!

THIS LETTER? THE LETTER YOU WROTE TO ME? I SHOWED IT TO HIM... I TOLD HIM YOU WROTE IT TO SYLVIA... HIS WIFE?

YOU MEAN, HAH... YOU MEAN I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE SYLVIA'S LOVER?



I TOLD HIM SHE'D BEEN MEETING YOU AT THE BOAT-HOUSE? AND THAT THE NIGHT SHE DIED, SHE'D GOTTEN DRUNK AND KNOCKED OVER A HURRICANE LAMP?

THAT'S A LAUGH, WE SPILLED ENOUGH KEROSENE AROUND THE PLACE TO FILL UP FIFTY LAMPS.



THEY STARTED OFF, AGIN IN AGIN, LAUGHING...

THE POOR STUPID FOOL... HE WAS SO ANGRY, HE CAME OUT HERE AND SPLIT THAT DOUBLE MONUMENT IN TWO, HE LEFT WORD THAT HE WANTED TO BE BURIED AT THE OTHER END OF THE CEMETERY WITH HIS HALF...

HAH!



THEIR LAUGHTER FADED AND THE GREY SKY SEEMED TO RANG HEAVEN... AND ONCE AGAIN CAME A DISTANT RUMBLE OF THUNDER, MUTTERING THE WARNING OF THE COMING STORM.





DEATH IS A STRANGE STATE. THE BODY LIES IMMOBILE, DECAYING, FALLING TO DUST, WORSE THAN THE BODY HEARS TAKE TIME TO PENETRATE INTO THE DEAD BRAIN. TAKE TIME TO BE ASSIMILATED... TAKE TIME FOR THEIR MEANING TO BE UNDERSTOOD. IT WAS OVER SIX MONTHS LATER THAT THE THREATENED STORM FINALLY BROKE. THE SOFT GRAVE EARTH BEFORE THE JARRED HEADSTONE CRUMBLE... THE BODY PUSHED UPWARD.



BITS OF FLESH FELL AWAY AS IT TOTTLED OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE. FINALLY IT STOOD BEFORE THE HORTON MANSION, GRIMMING IN AT THE COUPLE DEATED BEFORE THE FIRE.



THEY FOUND THE LAWYER'S AND THE HOUSEKEEPER'S BODIES IN THE CEMETARY THE NEXT MORNING, LYING GROTESQUELY BESIDE THE DOUBLE GRAVESTONE THAT HAD BEEN CAREFULLY FITTED TOGETHER DURING THE NIGHT.



THE THING MOVED AHEADWARDLY FORWARD... STUMBLING ON DEER-TO LEGS... COVERED WITH SLIME.



AS THE FRENCH OODS SMASHED OPEN AND THE ROOTED AND FOUL-SMELLING THING CAME THROUGH, MITCH AND ACHES SCREAMED.



PERHAPS, YEP, KISSIES. SYLVIA AND ALEXANDER SIDE BY SIDE AGAIN... IN DEATH, AS IN LIFE, AND, UNLESS ONE LOOKS CAREFULLY THREE DAYS, ONE CAN HARDLY TELL THAT THEIR DOUBLE GRAVESTONE WAS EVER SPLIT IN TWO. WELL, I'LL BE BACK A LITTLE LATER WITH ANOTHER TERROR-TALE FROM MY COLLECTION.

NOW, THE GRIFF-KEEPER WAITS WITH HIS OODIOUS OFFERING, IN THE WEATHER AS THE PROSPECTIVE MURDER VICTIM SAID TO HIS ASSAILANT WHEN HE SAW THE KNIFE...

... SO LONG !



— THE END —



# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

WELL, HEN! FOND REGRETATIONS, FRIENDS. WELCOME, NOW, TO THE CRYPT OF TERROR. THIS IS YOUR M.C. (MORIBD CREEP), THE CRYPT-KEEPER, READY TO RELATE ANOTHER REVOLTING ROMANCE FROM MY COLLECTION HERE IN THE CRYPT. FOR MY BRIDESOME GUEST-SPOT IN K.K.'S MAG, I HAVE CHOSEN A CHERRISHED CHILLER... A TOUCHING TERROR-TALE... A FOUL FAVORITE OF MINE. IT CONCERNS A SMALL GROUP OF CHILDREN ENAGED THE DELIGHTFUL TASK OF HOLDING A MOSH FUNERAL. I CALL THIS BLOOD-CURDLING TALE...

## LET THE PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME!

THE SKY HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO DARKEN WHEN THE CHILDREN, DRESSED IMPRECABLY IN THEIR BEST SUNDAY CLOTHES, CAME SLOWLY UP THE STREET, CARRYING THE CRUDE WOODEN COFFIN ON THEIR SMALL SHOULDERS. THEIR LITTLE MOUTHS WERE SET GRIMACE. THEIR EYES GLISTENING WITH TEARS. MR. COOTES LOOKED UP FROM HIS GARDENING WORK AND GRINNED...

WELL, I'LL BE DARNED...



MR. COOTES CHUCKLED SOFTLY AS THE PROCESSION PASSED UP THE STREET TOWARD THE EMPTY LOT AT THE PARK CORNER. HE CALLED TO MRS. COOTES, WHO SAT IDLING IN THE KITCHEN ON THE FRONT PORCH...

GLAD? LOOK AT THEM CUNNING BOYS. WILL YOU? THEY'RE HAVIN' A REGULAR FUNERAL?

HUH? WHERE, EDWIN? WE'LL BE... I'LL BE...





CLARA COOTES ROSE, STRETCHING, EASED HERSELF DOWN THE PORCH STEPS, AND STOOD BESIDE HER CRACKLING HUSBAND.

AIN'T THAT THE **CODEST** **JWINE** YOU **EVER** **SAR**, CLARA? I'LL BET SOME **PUT** **OUT** **ON** **DOO** **GOT** **ITSELF** **KILLED** **AN** **THEY'** **BE** **BURIN'** **IT**!

KIDS ARE **ACHERS** **SO** **DOIN'** **OUTR** **THINGS**, **THEY** **LIKE** **THAT**, **DOIN'** **WENT** **AN'** **DOIN'** **IT**!

SO **DOIN'** **OUTR** **THINGS**, **THEY** **LIKE** **THAT**, **DOIN'** **WENT** **AN'** **DOIN'** **IT**!



HENRY DRAPER, THE COOTES' NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR AND THE TOWN'S SOLE UNDERTAKER, SHOOK HIS HEAD IN AMAZEMENT AS THE GRIM UNDERTAKER MOVED PAST HIS FRONT YARD.

WENT AND DID **WHAT**, MR. **DRAPER**?

WHY, WENT AN' HELD THAT **FUNERAL** THEY SAID THEY WANTED TO HOLD, MRS. COOTES. I THOUGHT THEY WAS **KIDDIN'**!



MR. COOTES LAUGHED AT MR. DRAPER.

THEY'RE **JOVIN'** **ON** **POOR** **RACKET**, EX, **HEB**?

FUNNY **THING**, **ED**! THEY STOPPED BY THE **PARKIN** THIS AFTERNOON. STARTED **ASKIN'** **ALL** **KINDS** **OF** **QUESTIONS**.



'COURSE, I JUST HUNDRED 'EM **ALONE**.

WHY THE SUDDEN **INTEREST** IN THE **DETAILS** **OF** **FUNERAL** **CEREMONIES**, **HEB**?

WE'RE GONNA **HAVE** **ONE**, MR. **DRAPER**. **TELL** **US** **WHAT** **WE'** **S'POSED** **T'DO**?

WELL... **FIRST** **OF** **ALL**, YOU GOTTA MAKE A **NICE** **COFFIN** **GUTTA** **FINE**. THEN EVERYBODY GETS **DRESSED** **UP** **REAL** **FINE** IN THEIR **SUNDAY** **BEST** AND YOU **CARRY** **THE** **COFFIN** **TO** **THE** **CHURCH**.

WE'RE GONNA **USE** **THE** **OLD** **LOT**.



SOOO **ENOUGH**, I **GUESS**, LET'S **SEE**. THEN YOU **DIG** **A** **HOLE** **AND** **PUT** **THE** **COFFIN** **IN** **AND** **SOMEBOY** **SAYS** **SOME** **NICE** **WORDS** **ABOUT** **THE** **DEPARTED** **AND** **YOU** **FILL** **UP** **THE** **HOLE** **AND** **PUT** **SOME** **FLOWERS** **ON** **IT** **AND** **THAT'S** **ALL** **DOIN'**.

HEE, MR. **DRAPER**, **THANKS** **A** **LOT**.



MR. DRAPER SHOOK HIS HEAD, STARING AFTER THE **SAD** **LITTLE** **CLOUP**.

I NEVER THOUGHT THEY WAS **SERIOUS**, THOUGH. I THOUGHT THEY WAS **PULLIN'** **MY** **LEG**. **HMMM**? **LOOK** **AT** **'EM**!

WELL, FOR **CRYIN'** **OUT** **LOUD**? **WHAT'S** **GOIN'** **ON**?





OLD DOC STACEY, THE TOWN DOCTOR, SCRATCHED HIS HEAD AS HE STARED AT THE PROCESSION MOVING ALONG THE STREET IN THE GATHERING TWILIGHT.

OH, YEAH! DOC! THAT'S SOMETHING! SEE? THE KIDS ARE HAVING A FUNERAL! SO SAYS SOME DOG? DIED?

YOU KNOW THEY WERE IN MY OFFICE THIS AFTERNOON.

'AT THE TIME, I DON'T THINK ANYTHING ABOUT IT. THEY ASKED ME.

HOW CAN YOU TELL WHEN SOMETHING'S DEAD, DOC?

WELL... ITS HEART STOPS BEATING, KIDS! WHY... SOMETHIN' DIE?

YEAH, DOC? OR... AN' WHAT DO YOU DO WITH SOMETHIN' IF IT IS DEAD?

WHY... BURY IT, I GUESS. THERE'S NOTHIN' ELSE YOU CAN DO!

DOC STACEY SHRUGGED AS THE PROCESSION PASSED ON UP THE DARKENED STREET.

POOR KIDS! THEY TAKE EVERYTHIN' SO SERIOUS THESE DAYS. WHAT YOU SAY IT WAS THAT DOGS HERE?

WHY, A DOG, I I THINK...

MMMMH! MORBID KIDS!

FRANK BONGAGE, THE TOWN'S CANDYSTORE OWNER, STOOD ON HIS FRONT STEPS STARRING AT THE SILENT, SAD-EYED CHILDREN.

OH, EYERIN' FRANK? YOU SAY SOMETHIN'?

I SAID THEY'RE MORBID KIDS... THAT'S WHAT I SAID, DOC. ALWAYS WEARIN' IN DEATH AND DYIN'...

DOC STACEY JUST GRINNED.

IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL FOR KIDS THEIR AGE TO BE CURIOUS ABOUT DEATH, FRANK. AFTER ALL, IT IS ONE OF LIFE'S UNPREDICTABLE MYSTERIES.

NOT NATURAL DYIN', DOC. THEY'RE INTERESTED IN VIOLENT DYIN'!

'WHY, JUST YESTER DAY THEY ALL STOPPED DOWN AT MY STORE AND THEN ONE OF 'EM SAW THEM HEADLINES... YOU KNOW.

LOOK!

'KILLER EXECUTED. DIED IN CHAIR!'

SEE? LET'S BUY A COPY? I GOT A PENNY.











"NOT EXACTLY. THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHAT THE PUNISHMENT FOR ROBBERY WAS, AND I TOLD THEM..."

OF COURSE, IT DEPENDS UPON THE JUDGE WHO SENTENCES HIM.

THEN A ROBBER DOESN'T HAVE TO DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR?

OH, NO? ONLY A CAPITAL CRIME IS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH. LIKE MURDER OR KIDNAPPING?

KIDNAPPING? WHAT'S KIDNAPPING?

LATER SHUSTER GRINNED. SO I HAD TO EXPLAIN ALL ABOUT KIDNAPPING TO THEM LAST OVER AN HOUR... THANKS TO YOU, MISS FREEDY.

WELL, I DON'T SEND THEM, MR. SHUSTER! OH, LOOK...

THE GREEN-FACED PROCESSION HAD ENTERED THE LOT. NOW, THEY STOOD SOLEMNLY BEFORE THE GRUDDLY CAR PIT...

AREN'T THEY SWEET...

SO SERIOUS, TOO...

SLOWLY, THEY DROPPED THE COFFIN FROM THEIR SHOULDERS AND LOWERED IT INTO THE YARNING HOLE.

HEH, HEH...

SOMETHING, EN?

LATER SHUSTER LEANED ON HIS NEIGHBOR'S FENCE, WATCHING THE CEREMONY...

KIDS SURE DO STRANGE THINGS THESE DAYS, EH, JUDGE DELANEY...

FUNNY THING YOU SHOULD MENTION THAT, STEP?

THOSE KIDS CAME TO SEE ME IN MY CHAMBERS YESTERDAY. THEY WANTED TO KNOW ALL ABOUT JURY TRIALS?

JURY TRIALS? WHY?



NOW, THE SOLEMN-FACED MOURNERS WERE SHOVELING THE DOL, BACK INTO THE GRAVE UPON THE ROUGELY HEAVY COFFIN. JUDGE DELANEY SHRUGGED...



FREDDY FRE-D-OFF WHERE ARE YOU?

MRS. PHILIPS CAME UP THE STREET, CALLING HER SIX YEAR OLD SON'S NAME. SHE STOPPED FOR A MOMENT, STUDYING THE GRIM GROUP OF FOUR THROUGH SEVEN YEAR OLDS STANDING IN THE EMPTY LOT...



ISN'T FREDDY WITH THEM, MRS. PHILLIPS?

I'M AFRAID NOT, JUDGE DELANEY. THE KIDS DON'T SPEAK TO FREDDY ANY MORE.



OH? WHY NOT?

WELL... FREDDY TOOK SOMETHING FROM ONE OF THEM AND THEY'VE NEVER FORGIVEN HIM FOR IT!



JUDGE DELANEY STARED AT THE LITTLE GROUP TAMPING DOWN THE FRESH GRAVE...

SHOOTER! WHAT DID YOU TELL THEM ABOUT KIDNAPPING?

HOOT! WHY... WHY...



I TOLD THEM THAT WHEN SOMEONE STEALS SOMEONE ELSE'S CHILD, THAT'S KIDNAPPING.

HAH!

MRS. PHILIPS SHROOURED. A DEAD SILENCE SEEMED TO FALL UPON THE DARKENED STREET. A BREEZE STIRRED, MOVING ALONG, MAKING THE OTHERS SHIVER IN ITS CHILL... THE LAWYER... THE TEACHER... THE ELECTRICIAN... THE REST, MRS. PHILIPS WHO SPED, MOISTENED.

IT WAS EMMA LOU'S DOLL THAT FREDDY TOOK? HE HE WOULDN'T GIVE IT BACK.

CHOO!

GOOD LORD



ACROSS THE STREET, IN THE EMPTY LOT, ONE OF THE CHILDREN WAS SAYING SOME WORDS OVER THE GRAVE OF THE DEPARTED...

HEH, HEH! WELL, KIDDER. THAT'S MY FELD KAH. SHOOTING? THAT'S WHAT FREDDY SAID WHEN THEY PUNISHED HIM INTO THE LIVE WIRE. NOW IT'S TIME TO TURN YOU BACK TO ME... I'LL SEE YOU NEXT IN THE OLD WITCH'S KEEP-FAR, THE HAUNT OF FEAT. IN THE MEANTIME... AS THE (HOWL) SAID WHEN HE STUCK THE

REMAINS OF HIS LATEST VICTIM INTO THE DEEP FREEZE 'KEEP FELL'





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**WRECKER!**



Carlson squinted through the tiny cab window: Jaffrey was on the other side of the skeletal structure, working over the wall which Carlson's wrecker had just demolished. Twelve stories up like this, Carlson thought, a fall would prove instantly fatal. And no one could say that the wrecking machine hadn't gotten out of Carlson's control. Jaffrey's death would be listed as accidental... one of the things that made wrecking such a dangerous profession!

Carlson sighted along the derrick-like arm projecting in front of his cab, intent on the steel cable which hung from the towering derrick. The iron ball dangling at the end of the metal line was immense: ponderous enough, when crashed against a wall, to reduce concrete to dust. One swipe would certainly send Jaffrey spinning over the side of the half-demolished building!

Carlson's fist tightened on the control knob... the derrick slowly moved and the heavy iron ball began to swing like a gargantuan pendulum. Now its arc brought it fifteen yards from Jaffrey... now ten... now five. Another delicate turn of the knob and the derrick was precisely where it must be if the wrecking ball was to crash into Jaffrey...

There was a sickening crunch, a sharp scream of agony and desper-



ately fleeing arms. Even as the workers turned in dismay, Carlson leaped from the cab and peered down through the girders. A momentary flash, like that of a figure fading away as it dropped, told the story of Jaffrey's plunge to the street far below. Slowly Carlson straightened up, a smile of triumph flickering across his face. Now there'd be no more trouble from Jaffrey... Carlson was once again the unchallenged boss of this labor gang!

He turned and, out of the corner of his eye, saw the steel cable plunging toward him! He tried to scramble out of the way, cursing himself for moving from the cab in order to watch Jaffrey's fall. Overhead Carlson heard an ominous roar: saw the cable slashing toward him with incredible speed...

Suddenly he felt a searing stab of pain at his throat. He was aware of being lifted bodily and hurled flat against the wooden scaffolding of the temporary floor. Before he could scream aloud he was conscious of the fiery agony running like wild flame through his throat... of seeing blood pouring darkly over his eyeballs. Weakly he tried to touch his tortured neck, to soothe the skin that felt as if it had been mangled raw. Then blackness closed in on Carlson like a stifling shroud...

A minute later, the workers stood solemnly over Carlson's crumpled body. "T-That steel cable," one man whispered, "it wrapped around his throat like a hangman's noose! T-Tore through his skin the way a knife cuts through butter! I-I never saw a man's head cut off so quickly!"



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# THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

A pos on my mercenary idiot editors! They have just informed me that they desire to take over my entire column this issue to announce their latest insidious money-grabbing scheme to "con" a few more coins from your... or your old man's... grimy little piggy bank... namely, the formation of a national E.C. fan organization! O.K., bird-brains... you're on the hot-air-V.K.

Thank you, V.K., you old bagel-head, for the confidence-inspiring manner in which you broke the deliciously happy news to our deliriously happy readers! But before launching into the sordid details of the club, we would like to sketch in a little background. We started out with two conditions that positively had to be met:

1) Our club would have to be a different kind of fan club... a continuously active club that would provide long-range interest, enjoyment and benefits for its members! And...

2) Our club would have to be a non-profit fan club! The Vault-Keeper to the contrary notwithstanding, the only income we at E.C. derive... or care to derive!... from our efforts comes from the newsstand sales of our 16c mags. We actually lose a little on subscriptions, and make very little on the annuals... both are primarily offered as services to promote good will! If you readers want a fan club, we're more than happy to oblige... but, again, as a service, not for profit!

So here's what we've come up with

1) **THE NAME:** As one reader wrote a while back, "E.C. magazines are habit-forming." So what could be more logical than to call the organization, "THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB"?

2) **THE SET-UP:** The E.C. Fan-Addict Club will consist of the national "parent" organization, and local chapters. Everyone who joins will be a member of the national organization. In addition, any group of five or more prospective members may join as an authorized chapter of the national organization. Each such chapter will be assigned a charter number. The name and address of the elected president of each authorized chapter will be made available to all members, so that those who are not already a member of a chapter will be able to join the one nearest them if they wish to.

3) **WHAT YOU GET:** Each member will receive a full-color 7% by 10% membership

certificate, suitable for framing; a wallet-size membership identification card; a striking membership patch for sweaters, jackets, etc.; and a very distinguished-looking membership pin!

4) **COST OF JOINING:** Membership in THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB will set you back two bits... 25c! This 25c represents the exact cost to us (plus or minus a fraction of a cent!) of one envelope, one stamp, and the above mentioned four items... certificate, card, patch, and pin! (The cost of Ruby's and Nancy's loving labor in packing and mailing is lovingly donated by E.C.)

5) **POSSIBLE FUTURE PLANS:** We are considering publishing an E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB BULLETIN, containing such features as national and local chapter news; advance inside information on new titles, future stories, and special issues, etc.; articles and stories submitted by members; and a "back-issue trading post!" Only club members would be eligible to subscribe, with the price and frequency of publication yet to be decided upon.

We are also considering some sort of "E.C. Surprise-of-the-Month" plan for members. What the surprises might be, and what we might have to clip you for THIS one, is also as yet undetermined.

6) **IF YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED:** For an individual membership, send 25c along with your clearly printed name and address, to:

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB  
Room 705  
225 Lafayette Street  
N.Y.C. 12 N.Y.

If five or more of you wish to join as an authorized chapter, enclose each member's name and address, along with 25c for each name, and indicate the name of the elected president. We will notify each president of his chapter's charter number... but each chapter member will receive his membership credentials, etc., individually.

So there it is! Meet new friends. Make new enemies. See the world. Spend money. Join THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!!!

(In honor of the occasion, we will forego the usual subscription plug that 6 issues of this, or any other E.C. mag. cost 75c.—ed.)



HERE IS A WELL-FRAMED TALE  
OF TERROR. I CALL IT...

# A SLIGHT CASE of MURDER!



THE NEWSPAPER STORIES AND WORD-OF-MOUTH RUMORS THAT HAD BEEN COMING OUT OF THE TERRIFIED TOWN OF HILLDALE HAD DEEPLY DISTURBED OLD DOCTOR SWANSON, AND HE'D FINALLY PACKED A FEW THINGS INTO AN OVERNIGHT BAG AND TAKEN A TRAIN THERE. NOW, STANDING UPON HILLDALE'S EMPTY STATION PLATFORM, LISTENING TO THE TRAIN WHISTLE FADING IN THE DISTANCE AND SIZING UP AT THE ABANDONED MANSION ON THE FAR HILL OVERLOOKING THE SLEEPY TOWN, THE OLD DOCTOR MOODED GRIMLY...

YET! THAT'S THE ANSWER, ALL RIGHT, THAT'S THE ANSWER TO ALL THOSE KILLINGS.



DOC SWANSON STARED AT THE DISTANT RUN-DOWN BOARD-UP OLD MANSION FOR A FEW MINUTES. THEN HE SHUGGED, SLOWLY PICKED UP HIS BAG, AND STARTED WEARILY DOWN THE DESERTED DUSTY MAIN STREET. AS HE'D STOP BEFORE EACH BUILDING AND STORE, HE'D SMILE OR FROWN OR SHAKE HIS HEAD SADLY AND MOVE ON. THEN HE CAME TO THE BUILDING HE WAS LOOKING FOR. HE ENTERED...

AFTERNOON STRANGER  
MY NAME'S MOUTON. I'M  
SHERIFF OF HILLDALE.  
CAN I HELP YOU?

I CAME TO HELP  
YOU, SHERIFF MOUTON!  
I CAME ABOUT THE  
MURDERS YOU BEEN  
HAVIN'! I THINK I  
KNOW WHO'S *DOIN'*  
*'EM* OF COURSE.  
IT'S ONLY A THEORY.



SHERIFF MOUTON EYED THE OLD DOCTOR SUSPICIOUSLY.  
LISTEN, STRANGER. I'M FULL  
OF TO HERE WITH GRACKPOT  
THEORIES 'BOUT THEM  
MURDERS.

THIS IS NO GRACK-  
POT THEORY,  
SHERIFF. I HAVE  
THE ANSWER, THE  
PERSON YOU WANT...





THE SHERIFF LAUGHED

PERSON? WHAT PERSON? 'TAINT NO PERSON WHAT'S BEEN DOIN' THE KILLIN'S, STRANGER. 'TAINT NOthin' HUMAN

OH! AND WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?



THE SHERIFF SET BACK AND LIT UP HIS PIPE...

THE FACTS PROVE IT WERENT NO HUMAN, STRANGER. NO HUMAN BEING COULD'VE COMMITTED THE MURDERS. NO HUMAN BEING COULD'VE GOTTEN IN...



...POINTED THE LIT MATCH AT THE OLD DOOR...

TAKE LILA MARTINSON FOR EXAMPLE. SHE WAS THE FIRST 'T SHE. SOMEBODY HEARD HER SCREAMIN' AND PHONED ME UP



'WHEN I GOT THERE, HER DOOR WAS LOCKED FROM THE INSIDE. I HAD TO BREAK IT DOWN GOOD LOUD!



'SHE WAS LYIN' ON THE FLOOR OF HER ROOM IN A POOL OF BLOOD. SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE'D BEEN ATTACKED BY SOME WILD ANIMAL... ALL TORN AND SLASHED AND CUT-LIKE...

THIS WINDOW'S LOCKED TOO, SHERIFF

THAT'S STRANGE IFN THE DOOR AND WINDOW WERE BOTH LOCKED FROM THE INSIDE, HOW'D THE MURDERER GET IN OR OUT?



SHERIFF MOUTON PUFFED ON HIS PIPE, JAGGING THE MATCH FLAME INTO THE BOWL, TILL THE PACKED TOBACCO GLOWED RED.

DO YOU SEE, STRANGER... WHEN YOU SAY IT'S A PERSON WE'RE LOOKIN' FOR, YOU'VE DEAD WRONG. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A PERSON TO GET IN OR OUT OF LILA MARTINSON'S ROOM ACCORDIN' T' THE EVIDENCE.

WERENT THERE ANY OTHER OPENINGS IN HER ROOM? A VENT OR A CHIMNEY FLUE?



SHERIFF MOUTON STARED AT THE OLD DOOR...

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THERE WAS A HOT AIR-PORT IN HER ROOM. BUT IT WASN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR A HUMAN BEING TO CUMBE THROUGH...

NOT AN ORDINARY HUMAN BEING, SHERIFF





THE SHERIFF'S EYES GLEAMED IN THE MATCH-LIGHT...

WHAT ARE YOU DRINKING AT, STRANGER? WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

I KNOW WHO YOUR KILLER IS, SHERIFF! AND I KNOW WHERE TO TRAP HIM!



THE SHERIFF STARED AT OLD SWANSON. THE OLD DOC STOOD UP...

MEET ME AT THE BOTTOM OF HILLDALE HILL TONIGHT, SHERIFF. I'LL SHOW YOU THE MURDERER...

I'LL BE THERE... I'LL BE THERE...



THE SHERIFF PUFFED THOUGHTFULLY ON HIS PIPE FOR A MOMENT AFTER THE DOC LEFT. THEN HE CURSED AND TOSSED THE MATCH TO THE FLOOR.

QUAKE! STRANGER!



OLD DOC SWANSON CONTINUED ON DOWN THE DESERTED MAIN STREET. HIS NEXT STOP WAS A SMALL RUN-DOWN SHOP AT THE FAR END OF TOWN...

IS THIS THE EDITORIAL OFFICE OF THE HILLDALE CLIMBER... WRIT AND PUBLISHED EVERY OTHER WEEK 'CEPT JULY AND AUGUST BY PHIL INGRAM, ACE REPORTER AND CHIEF TYPE-BETTER...

WELL, I'LL BE A HOOD-TIED SON OF A SLOPPY SEA-DOCK. IF IT AIN'T SAM SWANSON...!



THE WICKED OLD MAN IN THE GREEN EYE SHADE BROOK THE OLD DOC'S HARD WARMLY...

WHAT BRINGS YOU BACK TO HILLDALE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, DOC?

MURDER, PHIL!



PHIL INGRAM'S FACE DARKENED...

STRANGEST DAMN MYSTERY THIS TOWN EVER HAD, DOC. FOUR MURDERS, AND EVERY ONE PRACTICALLY THE SAME. FOUR PRETTY YOUNG WOMEN, EACH LOCKED IN AICE AND DIGN IN THEIR ROOMS WITH NO WAY FOR ANYBODY T'GET IN OR OUT. NOTHIN' HUMAN, THAT IS... AND THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN, THEY'RE DEAD!

YOU TALK LIKE SHERIFF MOUTON, PHIL!



THE WHOLE TOWN'S CONVINCED THE THING THAT MURDERED THEM FOUR GALS WASN'T HUMAN, DOC. COULDN'T BE!

PERHAPS IT ISN'T HUMAN AFTER ALL, PHIL. ANYWAY, I HAVE A FAVOR T'ASK OF YOU...





THAT NIGHT, OLD DOC SWANSON STOOD AT THE BOTTOM OF MANSION HILL, WAITING FOR SHERIFF MCALTON.

THAT FOD, SHERIFF?

YEP! IT'S ME! NOW, WHERE'S THE KILLER...?



THE DOG POINTED TO THE ANCIENT EDIFICE LEONINE GARD AND FORE-BOODING ON THE CHEST OF THE HILL.

WE'LL FIND THE KILLER UP THERE, SHERIFF... IN THE OLD BATES MANSION! I'M SURE OF IT!

THE "BATES" SAY... I THOUGHT YOU WERE A STRANGER HERE?



ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF, SHERIFF. I AM DOCTOR SAM SWANSON. I LIVED HERE IN HILDALE OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO. I FIRST STARTED PRACTICING MEDICINE HERE...

I KNEW YOU WEREN'T A STRANGER ANYMORE! CALLS IT THE BATES MANSION ANYMORE!



THEY'D STARTED UP THE HILL TOWARD THE BORDERED-UP OLD MANSION...

BUT WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THE KILLER'LL BE UP THERE, DOC?

JUST A HUNCH, SHERIFF. YOU SEE, SOMETHING HAPPENED TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO... UP THERE... IN THAT MANSION... AND I THINK IT'S THE ANSWER...



"I WAS JUST A YOUNG DOCTOR, THEN... FRESH OUT OF MED SCHOOL. I'D COME TO HILDALE TO SET UP A PRACTICE. ONE DAY I HAD A VISITOR..."

DOCTOR SWANSON. DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

OF COURSE. YOU'RE AMELIA BATES. YOU LIVE IN THE MANSION UP ON THE HILL OUTSIDE OF TOWN. YOUR HUSBAND IS JOHN BATES, THE FAMOUS WORLD TRAVELER...



"AMELIA BATES WAS GOING TO HAVE A BABY, SHE WANTED ME TO BE THE ATTENDING PHYSICIAN WHEN HER TIME CAME..."

I'D BE DELIGHTED, MRS. BATES. AND... CONGRATULATIONS. YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND MUST BE VERY HAPPY...

MY HUSBAND WILL NEVER KNOW, DOCTOR. I JUST RECEIVED WORD THIS MORNING THAT HE HAD BEEN KILLED IN AN AIRPLANE CRASH...



"AMELIA BATES WENT INTO HOURS AFTER THAT, AND HARDLY ANYONE IN THE TOWN SAW HER, ALTHOUGH THEY ALL KNEW OF THE COMING EVENT. THEN, ONE DAY... I RECEIVED HER URGENT CALL..."

YOU'D BETTER COME UP RIGHT AWAY, DOCTOR. I THINK... IT'S TIME...

I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, MRS. BATES!





THE TWO MEN, THE AGED DOCTOR AND THE SHERIFF, CLIMBED THE RICKETY OLD STEPS OF THE WEATHERBEATEN ABANDONED MANSION...

AND YOU, DELIVERED THE WIDOW BATES'S CHILD, DOCT...

IF YOU COULD CALL IT A CHILD, SHERIFF, IT WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE UNFORTUNATE THINGS, THE CHILD WAS A MISCHAPEN MONSTER.



ITS HEAD WAS NORMAL, BUT ITS BODY AND ARMS AND LEGS HAD NOT DEVELOPED FULLY. MRS. BATES SAW THE EXPRESSION ON MY FACE AFTER I DELIVERED THE BABY!

CHORE...

WHAT IS IT, DOCTOR? WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY BABY?



I TRIED TO TELL MRS. BATES WHY AS I COULDN'T, I TRIED TO TAKE HER OUT OF SEEING THE CHILD. BUT SHE REFUSED!

NO MATTER HOW WELL FORMED IT IS, IT IS STILL MY BABY, DOCTOR! AND HERE IT WILL STAY... AS LONG AS IT LIVES. GIVE IT TO ME...

MRS. BATES, WHAT SHOULD I TELL THE TOWN-FOLK?



MRS. BATES TOOK HER MONSTROUS CHILD IN HER ARMS... YOU CAN TELL THE TOWNFOLK THE BABY WAS BORN DEAD, DOCTOR! THIS WILL BE OUR SECRET! FOURS...

AND MORE?

AS YOU WISH, MRS. BATES.



THE DOOR TO THE OLD MANSION SQUEELED OPEN ON TIME-WORNED HINGES. DOCTOR SWANSON STEPPED INSIDE. THE SHERIFF FOLLOWED...

I SAW THE CHILD ONCE MORE AFTER THAT, SHERIFF. IT WAS JUST BEFORE I SOLD MY PRACTICE AND LEFT BRIDGDALE. I CAME UP HERE TO SEE GOOD-BYE TO MRS. BATES. THE CHILD CAME OUT OF THE KITCHEN, THERE, SLITHERING...



SLITHERING ALONG ON ITS UNDEVELOPED HANES AND FEET LIKE SOME WEIRD LIZARD WITH A HUMAN HEAD...



THE DOCTOR STARES INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE EMPTY SUNNY-LAZEN LIVING ROOM OF THE OLD MANSION. LISTEN!

AND YOU THINK THIS... THIS... MONSTER-CHILD IS OUR KILLER, ENLIGHTEN?

A CREATURE OF THAT SORT COULD GET INTO A ROOM THAT IS ORDINARILY INACCESSIBLE TO A FULLY DEVELOPED HUMAN BEING, IT COULD SEIZE THROUGH VENTILATION SYSTEMS... COME DOWN CHIMNEY FLUES...





THE SHERIFF EYED THE DOCTOR SUZIDALLY.

BUT, THE  
MOTIVET  
WHAT  
MOTIVE  
DID IT HAVE?

REVENGE, PERHAPS.  
THE CREATURE COULD  
HAVE BEEN IN LOVE  
WITH EACH OF THE  
MURDERED WOMEN.



WHEN IT REVEALED ITSELF, THE  
DO THE WOMEN IT LOVED,  
THEY WERE DISGUSTED  
AND REVOLTED. IT KILLED  
THEM IN ORDER TO SAFE-  
GUARD ITS SECRET.

SECRET  
THAT ONLY  
YOU  
KNOW



THE SECRET MOVED TOWARD THE  
DOCTOR. ANKWARDLY, STIFFLY.

AFTER I SPOKE TO WHAT MADE  
YOU THIS AFTERNOON, YOU SUSPECT  
I WENT OVER TO THE ME, DOCTOR?  
CLARION OFFICE. I  
EXAMINED ALL THE BACK  
ISSUES OF THE PAPER YOU  
WERE MENTIONED AS HAVING  
LEFT COMPANY WITH  
EACH OF THE MURDERED  
WOMEN. I THOUGHT.



THE DOCTOR BACKED OFF.

WHEN YOU LIFT YOUR PIPE,  
YOU LET THE MATCH SLIDE  
DOWN TO YOUR FINGER  
TIPS. YOU NEVER FELT  
THE FLAME... SENSED  
NO PAIN.

I'M GOING TO HAVE TO  
KILL YOU NOW, DOCTOR  
TO PROTECT MY  
SECRET.



SHERIFF MOULTON LUNGED AT THE DOCTOR. SUDDENLY THE  
ROOM WAS FILLED WITH THE SOUNDS OF RUNNING FOOT-  
STEPS. HORROR CRIES.

WE'VE HEARD ENOUGH,  
BOYS," THE OLD DOC  
WAS RIGHT!

LET'S  
GET  
HIM!

NO! NO!



MOULTON SCREAMED, REALIZING THAT HE'D BEEN TRAPPED. HE FLAILED AS  
FRANK INGRAM AND THE OTHERS STRUGGLED WITH HIM, THROWING HIM TO THE  
DUSTY MARBLE FLOOR, FEARING THE CLOTHES-COVERED FRANKENSTEIN  
FROM HIS NECK, RIPPING THE ARTIFICIAL LENS. THE MECHANICAL  
ARMS AROSE, EXPOSING HIS HORRORS UNDEVELOPED LIZARD-  
LIKE BODY.



GOOD LORD!

YOW, HORRIBLE!

HEH, HEH! YER, KIDNED. SHERIFF  
MOULTON WAS THE BATES MONSTER-  
CHILD IN DISGUISE. HE'D BUILT HIS  
MECHANICAL HUMAN BODY AND COME  
OUT OF HIDING, HOPING TO LEAD A  
NORMAL LIFE. THE TROUBLE WAS,  
SO HE HAD HIS PROSPECTIVE SPEAKERS  
WELL, THE OLD WITCH SMILED WITH

HER SLOP SERVANT,  
SO I'LL TURN YOU  
OVER TO HER THANKS  
FOR DROPPING INTO  
THE KNUX. DON'T  
FORGET ANYTHING  
WHEN YOU AWAKE.  
OR LEAVE! THE  
NOW, REMEMBER!  
DO UNTO OTHERS...



- THE END -



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEH! AND NOW THAT THOSE TWO OLD DEEDERS HAVE TEMPTED YOUR APPETITES FOR HORROR WITH THEIR, SHALL WE SAY, EVIL ENTICES... IT'S TIME FOR THE LAST COURSE... THE WIND-UP TO KICK PUTRID PERIODICAL. YEP... IT'S ME! THE OLD WITCH, MISTRESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR, READY TO SERVE A DELICIOUS DESSERT OF DELVINGS INTO THE DELICIOUS. READY? THEN OPEN YOUR MOUTH AND I'LL PUPPET IN 'S GALL THIS SCREAM-SOOPING

## STRUNG ALONG!

THE MARIONETTES, HANGING LIMPLY FROM THEIR PADS BESIDE TONY'S BED-TURNED LADY IN THE NIGHT GREEZE THAT WAFTED THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW. TONY FINISHED THEM RESSENTLY, STARING UP AT THE HEAVY BEAMS THAT CROSSED THE ARCHED CEILING ABOVE HIS HEAD. TEARS FILLED HIS EYES AND RAN DOWN INTO THE WRINKLES THAT FLECKED HIS FORTY-ODD-YEAR-OLD FACE. HIS VOICE WAS SOFT AND SAD AND TOUCHED WITH LONELINESS.

I'M DYING, MY LITTLE SKINNED FRIENDS, I'M DYING AND SHE DOESN'T CARE. SHE DOESN'T CARE AT ALL.



TONY TURNED TO THE LIFELESS FIGURES SUSPENDED BESIDE HIM. WOOD, THE CLOWN... VARYA, THE BALLET DANCER... THOMAS, THE BALLANT KNIGHT... THE OTHERS... HE SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY.

SHE COULD HAVE WAITED! SHE DIDN'T HAVE TO TELL ME TONIGHT... OF ALL NIGHTS, SHE COULD HAVE LET ME DIE BELIEVING SHE LOVED ME...





THE MARIONETTES HUNG NOTIONLESS NOW, FOR THE SKEWER HAD FACED. TONY TOUCHED EACH ONE LOVINGLY, FINAGLING A STRING HERE... THERE, MAKING RORY NODD SMILE, YARTA KICK IMPISHLY...

TONY SMILED WARMLY AS HE FINISHED THE SLIGHTLY COLORED FIGURES...

REMEMBER WHEN I MADE YOU, RORY... SO MANY YEARS AGO, I THOUGHT YOU WERE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MARIONETTE IN THE WHOLE WORLD.

I WORKED FEELS ON YOU... CARVING YOUR HEAD, YOUR ARMS, YOUR LEGS, AND SEWING YOUR COSTUME...



REMEMBER OUR FIRST SHOW TOGETHER? I WAS SO NERVOUS, BUT WHEN THE CURTAIN WAS OPENED AND YOU WERE PERFORMING AND THE AUDIENCE WAS LAUGHING, I WASN'T AFRAID ANYMORE...

AND AFTER THAT, I MADE YOU, YARTA, AND YOU JOINED OUR SHOW, AND THE PEOPLE CHEERED YOUR GRACEFUL APPEARANCES... YOUR DARTY FIGURES...



WE WERE A SUCCESS, WE THREE... AND I MADE MORE OF YOU, BUT THOMAS... THE REST OF YOU I HAD MORE BOBBING THAN I COULD FILL, BUT YOU WERE MADE OF WOOD AND CLOTH AND WORKED BY STRINGS. AFTER THE SHOWS YOU JUST NODD THERE SAID ONE NOTIONLESS, AND I WAS LONELY.

I PULLED YOUR STRINGS AND YOU CAME ALIVE AND MADE ME ROCK, BUT YOU COULDN'T GIVE ME WHAT I REALLY NEEDED, YOU COULDN'T GIVE ME LOVE... COMPANIONSHIP, AND THEN I MET SOMEONE WHO COULD GIVE ME THESE THINGS.





"I FELL IN LOVE WITH NORA, AND SHE IN TURN LOVED ME. SO WE WERE MARRIED."

"GOOD LUCK, YOU TWO!"

"HAPPY HONEYMOON!"

"NORA BROUGHT LIGHT INTO MY DARK LONELY LIFE. TOGETHER, WE TOURS THE WORLD, AND SHE SAT WITH PRESIDENTS AND KINGS AS I ENTERTAINED."

"BRAVO!"

"YOUR HUSBAND IS AMAZING, MR. ZARONGO."

"YES, ZARONGO."

"AND FOR MY FAITHFUL FRIENDS YOU PERFORMED WELL FOR ME. I WAS ABLE TO BUY NORA EVERYTHING... JEWELRY... FURS."

"LIKE IT, NORA?"

"IT'S BEAUTIFUL, TONY!"

"THIS LOVELY FOUR MANSION WITH ITS STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS AND BEAMED CATHEDRAL CEILINGS."

"IT'S ALL YOURS, DARLING."

"OH, TONY."

"I WORKED HARD FOR HER, AND IN TURN WORKED ALL OF YOU HARD BUT WHEN SOMETHING WENT WRONG WITH ANY OF YOU, I COULD FIX IT. BECAUSE I'M..."

"I'LL HAVE YOU FIXED IN A JIFFY, KOKO."

"BUT THERE WAS NO REPAIRING ME WHEN I BROKE DOWN. THE DOCTORS TOLD ME."

"IT'S YOUR HEART, MR. ZARONGO. YOU CAN NEVER WORK AGAIN."

"NORA SEEMED ALL BROKEN UP WHEN I TOLD HER THE BAD NEWS. I THOUGHT SHE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT ME... MY HEALTH."

"NEVER WORK AGAIN, TONY? BUT WHAT WILL WE DO?"

"WE HAVE THE HOUSE, NORA. WE'LL RETIRE... TAKE IT EASY."



"I WENT INTO FORCED RETIREMENT. BOOKINGS WERE CANCELED... CONTRACTS TORN UP... THE GREAT FORT ZAROVNO... THE MASTER PUPPETEER... WAS HUNG AWAY LIKE ONE OF HIS OWN MARIONETTES..."

IT'S AWAY HERE IN THE SUN, ISN'T IT, MORIA?

YES.

"MORIA TRIED TO NURSE ME BACK TO HEALTH... SHE CALLED IN DOGS FOR AFTER DOCTOR, BUT THEY ALL SHOOK THEIR HEADS..."

IF HE WORKS AGAIN, IT WILL KILL HIM. EVEN AN EMOTIONAL SHOCK.

OH?

"BILLS FILED UP. OUR SAVINGS WENT. MORIA WAS FORCED TO SELL HER JEWELRY... HER FURS... HER CAR. SHE GAVE UP."

MORIA, DON'T BE ANGRY! I KNOW HOW YOU LOVED YOUR PRETTY THINGS, BUT I CAN'T HELP IT. IF I WERE WELL...

ALL RIGHT, TOM! ALL RIGHT! LET'S NOT FALK ABOUT IT!

"SOON, ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS THIS HOUSE AND YOU. WE SPRAWLED ANGRY, THEN... TRY TO MAKE ME SELL YOU ALSO... BUT THAT, I REFUSED TO DO..."

NO, MORIA! NOT MY MARIONETTES! NOW THAT I'M BEDRIDDEN, THEY HELP PASS THE TIME...

BUT WE NEED THE MONEY! YOU'RE RIGHT! OOOO!

"I WAS DYING. I KNEW IT. BUT I COULD FACE DEATH. MORIA WAS BEHIND ME. MORIA WAS MY LIFE... WHO LOVED ME. AS LONG AS I BELIEVED THAT, I COULD FACE ANYTHING..."

DARLING MORIA, YOU'VE MADE MY LIFE COMPLETE. KNOWING YOU LOVE ME HAS...

DON'T HIDE YOURSELF, TOM! I NEVER LOVED YOU! I LOVED THE THINGS YOU COULD GIVE ME...

"THEN, MORIA TOLD ME THE TRUTH. SHE STOOD BESIDE MY BED AND TOLD ME... TONIGHT..."

MORIA! WHAT YOU HEARD ME? I MARRIED YOU FOR YOUR MONEY! THAT'S ALL! FOR YOUR MONEY! YOU COULD GIVE ME PRETTY THINGS, AND I WANTED PRETTY THINGS SO I PUT IN AN ACT...

"HER EYES WERE FILLED WITH HATE AND HER MOUTH WAS TWISTED INTO A SOREMOON GRIN AS SHE SPENT MONTHS WITH ME..."

ACTUALLY, I DESPISED YOU! I LOATHED YOU... YOUR TOUCH... YOUR CARESS... YOUR KISS! BUT WHILE YOU COULD GIVE ME WHAT I LIKED, I TOLERATED YOU...



AND AS SHE RAVED, I FELT THE PAIN IN MY CHEST GROW IN INTENSITY.

WHEN YOU GOT SICK, I STUCK AROUND!  
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT GET BETTER!  
NOW, WHEN I THINK OF THE TIME  
I'VE WASTED...

NORA...  
PLEASE...  
DON'T...



AM I, NORA? AM I KILLING  
YOU? WELL THAT'S WHAT I  
WANT TO DO. I'D LIKE TO BE  
FREE OF YOU... WHILE I'M  
STILL YOUNG...



'AND THEN SHE WALKED OUT... LAUGHING...

NORA... COME  
BACK...



'THE PAIN... GROWING UNTIL IT FELT AS IF A STEEL VISE  
WERE CRUSHING MY HEART BETWEEN ITS POWERFUL  
JAWS...

DON'T YOU LIKE THE  
FEELING, NOW? DON'T  
YOU? WELL... NOW  
YOU KNOW! I'VE  
HATED YOU FROM  
THE BEGINNING.

NORA... ENOUGH...  
YOU'RE KILLING  
ME!



'THE ATTACK CAME... JUST AS THE DOCTORS HAD PRE-  
DICTED. NORA STOOD THERE, HER FACE A STONE MASK,  
WATCHING ME WITHER...



'AND I'VE BEEN LYING HERE, WAITING... LISTENING...  
HOPING SHE'D RETURN. HOPING TO AWAKEN FROM THAT  
BAD DREAM. THE ATTACK HAD PASSED, AND I FELT  
MYSELF FADING, KNOWING I WAS DYING...

NORA... COME  
BACK...





TOMY WIPED AWAY A TEAR, FINGERING THE LIMP HARN-  
ICNETTES HANGING BESIDE HIM.

SO, YOU'VE ALL I HAVE LEFT NOW,  
LITTLE ONES. ALL I HAVE, SON  
LEFT. SHE WON'T BE BACK.

THE BREEZE COMING IN THE OPEN WINDOW STIRRED  
THE SUSPENDED FIGURES AS TOMY CLOSED HIS EYES...  
MURMURING SADDY...

NORA... SON  
NORA...

...AND AFTER A WHILE HE SLEPT...

A SOUND MADE TOMY OPEN HIS EYES.  
HE LOOKED TOWARD THE DOORWAY  
OF HIS BEDROOM. SHE STOOD  
THERE, SILHOUETTED IN THE HALL  
LIGHT...

NORA!

SHE SLIDED TOWARD HIM, HE  
REACHED FOR THE LIGHT. SHE  
PUT HER HAND ON HIS, GRABBING  
HER HEAD...

BUT I CAN'T SEE YOU  
OR DON'T YOU WANT ME  
TO SEE YOU?

SHE FELL TO HER KNEES BESIDE HIS  
BED. HE REACHED OUT, TOUCHING HER  
CHEEK...

ARE THOSE TEARS, NORA? ARE  
YOU CRYING? IS THAT WHY  
YOU WON'T LET ME TURN ON  
THE LIGHTS?

SHE MOODED, KISSING HIS HAND, HER BODY HEAVING  
WITH PITCHFUL GRIEVOUS SADS...

OH, NORA! YOU DIDN'T MEAN WHAT  
YOU SAID, DID YOU? YOU'RE SORRY!  
YOU'VE COME BACK TO TELL ME...

SHE MOODED AGAIN, LYING HER HEAD UPON HIS CHEST.

NORA... NORA... I KNEW YOU LOVED ME!  
I KNEW IT... DON'T SAY ANYTHING!  
THERE'S NO NEED!



TONY CUPPED NORA'S CHIN IN HIS HAND, STROKING HER SOFT HAIR.

"I'M GLAD YOU CAME TO ME, NORA. I'M GLAD YOU WOULDN'T LET ME DIE BELIEVING YOU DIDN'T LOVE ME..."



SHE SHOOK HER HEAD, CLINGING TO HIM, KISSING HIS CHEEK. HER LIPS DAMP AND TWITCHING WITH PASSION...

"I AM GOING TO DIE TONIGHT, NORA! I KNOW IT!" BUT I CAN DIE HAPPY NOW, MY DEAREST, KNOWING THAT YOU DO LOVE ME..."



HE TOOK HER IN HIS ARMS, KISSING HER SOFT NECK LIPS... WHISPERING...

"COME TO ME... DARLING... MAKE MY LAST NIGHT COMPLETE..."



AFTER A WHILE TONY LAY BACK UPON HIS PILLOW, GAZING UP INTO THE DARKNESS, GASPING FOR BREATH. HIS WORDS WERE A SOFT WHISPER CARRIED AWAY BY THE NIGHT BREEZE.



"THANK YOU, NORA... LAST..."

THEY FOUND NORA AND TONY LYING SIDE BY SIDE THE NEXT MORNING. THEY WERE BOTH DEAD. TONY HAD DIED HAPPILY DURING THE NIGHT, A SMILE UPON HIS FACE.



BUT NORA HAD DIED MUCH EARLIER... VIOLENTLY. SHE LAY WITH THE BLOOD THAT HAD BEEN MISTAKEN FOR TEARS NOW DRIED UPON HER CHEEKS. SHE LAY, LIMPLY, BESIDE TONY. THE FLESH DISMEMBERED SECTIONS OF HER BODY HELD TOGETHER BY TINY HUNDREDS SCREWED INTO THE JOINT-BONES. COUNTLESS FINE, ALMOST INVISIBLE, STRINGS RAN FROM EACH MOVABLE SECTION TO THE CEILING BEAM OVER THE BED. THE MARIONETTE MASK WAS EMPTY. THE SPINNING MARIONETTES WERE FOUND SPRAWLED UPON THE BEAM. NORA'S STRINGS TIED TO THEIR LIFELESS HANDS.



HOLY, HOLY. NOW THERE'S A STORY THAT TURNS AT THE HEART-STRING, EN, KIDDER? SO NORA HAD TONY ON THE ROPES, AND TONY'S MARIONETTES HAD ROPES ON HER. WELL, I'LL HAVE THE OLD PEN-POP SEETHING ONCE MORE IN MY OWN MAN. THE HAUNT OF FEAR, WHEN, I AS THE SIDE OF BED? SAID TO HIS OLD MARIONETTE, HANGING NEXT TO HER IN THE AUTOMOBILE'S ICE-BOX!... WE MEAT AGAIN!"



- THE END -







THE SHOW'S ON,  
GANG!

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SPARE  
TIME  
NEEDED

## Look At These Exceptional FIRST WEEK SPARE TIME EARNINGS

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\$63.14 first week spare time  
Mr. Anthony Avella, Wash.  
\$155.60 first week spare time  
Mrs. Agnes Michaels, Ind.  
\$44.18 first week spare time  
Mr. Russell P. Hart, New York  
\$23.30 first week spare time

Mrs. W. E. Pate, S. Dak.  
\$49.47 first week spare time  
Mr. A. E. Lovelace, Ga.  
\$42.89 first week spare time  
Mrs. Henry Shantz, Wyo.  
\$48.66 first week spare time  
Mr. J. Hillman Jr., Ohio  
\$48.72 first week spare time  
Mrs. John Gorman, Conn.  
\$71.54 first week spare time  
Mr. W. Rhee, Ill.  
\$78.72 first week spare time  
Miss Frances Freeman, Texas  
\$42.72 first week spare time

## NO HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASSING REQUIRED

Our unusual plan is a sure-fire money maker! Unconditional Guarantee is resulting a tremendous demand for Wil-Knit Nylons! Mrs. Nellie Gail of Iowa started out with one and made \$45.93 the very first week in just her spare hours. Mrs. Agnes McCull of South Carolina, did even better. Her spare time in her very first week brought her earnings of \$74.97. Mrs. Walter Sherman of New York turned her spare time into savings of \$63.14 her first week out. THERE'S EXCEPTIONAL EARNING FOR JUST SPARE TIME and in the very first week give you an idea of the possibilities!

## GUARANTEED AGAINST Runs, Wear and Even Snags!

Why is it so easy for Wil-Knit Salespeople to get orders? I'll tell you — it's because we stand back of Wil-Knit Nylons with the most amazing guarantee you have ever heard of. Your customers can wear out their hose. They can develop runs. They can even snag them. No matter what happens to make Wil-Knit Nylons unserviceable within 9 months, depending on quantity — we replace them free of charge under terms of our guarantee. No wonder women are anxious to buy Wil-Knit! And no matter it is easy to quickly build up a big and STEADY year around income. Earnings start immediately. Look at these exceptional figures — Louise A. Brown of Georgia, who \$10.40 first week spare time. Ethel Carpenter of Michigan, \$14.14. Selma Fisher, New York, reports earnings of \$70.40 under our unusual plan just for spare time in her first week. Mrs. Edward Lee of Miss., is writing to thank us for the new Plymouth she received, also reports "I actually earned \$12.68 in twenty minutes by the clock. I actually couldn't believe I earned that much until I re-checked my figures."

## SEND NO MONEY! JUST NAME AND HOSE SIZE.

**SNAP MAIL COUPON.** When answered for Snagging Stock, I shall send your choice of Nylons or Stock for your personal use. Just rush me name for the facts about the most successful line of hosiery for men, women and children ever offered. Your friends and neighbors will advise you and the unusual selection of most latest and best styles! Just send return of postal card now, and leave it more how you, too, can make big money in FULL or SPARE TIME and quickly for an EXTRA \$500.00 and a New Car over and above your cash earnings.

L. Lowell Within

WIL-KNIT HOSIERY CO., Inc., A-6138 Midway Greenfield, Ohio



## A CAR IN 4 MONTHS\*—AND UP TO \$20 IN A HALF DAY

"I cannot express my thrill upon receiving this beautiful new Chevrolet. I was a bit doubtful at first but now it is a reality and I thank you for making it so. I have earned this car in just four short months and I'm sure others can do the same. Thank you for making it possible for me to earn more money than ever before. I have earned as much as twenty dollars in one half day and my bonus since the first month was \$25.00." — Mrs. E. A. Cowing

## NEW CAR GIVEN... OR IF YOU ALREADY HAVE A CAR YOU CAN GET A NEW ONE ON OUR "TRADE-IN" PLAN

WIL-KNIT actually gives new Pontiac, Plymouth or Chevrolet to producers as a bonus in addition to your regular earnings. It is yours until you own have a car, and you get a new one even without trade-in car (bonus is given without giving a penny). Get the facts TODAY!

L. Lowell Within, WIL-KNIT HOSIERY CO., Inc. Be Sure to Send  
A-6138 Midway, GREENFIELD, OHIO New Size

Please rush all facts about your guaranteed hosiery money-making plan and NEW CAR offer. Everything you send me now is FREE.

MY HOSE SIZE IS \_\_\_\_\_ MY AGE IS \_\_\_\_\_ YEARS

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ HOME \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_



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NO. 34  
DEC.-JAN.

10¢



10¢

# THE VAULT OF HORROR®

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH







BADDOCK!  
MY JOY KNOWS  
NO BOUNDS! I  
HAVE JUST RECEIVED  
MY E.C. FAN-ADDICT  
CLUB MEMBERSHIP  
KIT WHICH INCLUDES  
A FULL COLOR  
TENDON ILLUMINATED  
CERTIFICATE, A STUDDY  
WALLET IDENTIFICATION  
CARD, AN ATTRACTIVE  
EMBROIDERED  
SHOULDER PATCH,  
AND A STUNNING  
ANTIQUE BRONZE  
FINISH BAG-  
RELIEF PIN. SO  
WHAT?

## SO WHAT? SO YOU, TOO, CAN JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!

FOR AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP, FILL OUT THE COUPON AND SEND IT IN, TOGETHER WITH 25¢. IF FIVE OR MORE OF YOU WISH TO JOIN AS AN AUTHORIZED CHAPTER, ENCLOSE EACH MEMBER'S NAME AND ADDRESS, ALONG WITH 25¢ FOR EACH NAME, AND INDICATE THE NAME OF THE ELECTED CHAPTER PRESIDENT. WE WILL NOTIFY EACH PRESIDENT OF HIS CHAPTER NUMBER. EVERY MEMBER, CHAPTER OR INDIVIDUAL, WILL RECEIVE HIS KIT DIRECTLY... BY RETURN MAIL.

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB  
ROOM 704  
225 JACARANTE STREET  
NEW YORK 12, N.Y.

SO, ALL RIGHT? SO HERE'S MY TWO BITS, SO MAKE ME A MEMBER, ALREADY, AND SEND ME THE THINGS AND STUFF LIKE WHAT THE KID UP THERE GOT... SO!

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_

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# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEY, HEY! HELLO, THERE, YOU CRAZY MIXED-UP KID! I'M HAPPY TO SEE THAT YOU HAVE GATHERED ENOUGH COURAGE TO VENTURE ONCE AGAIN INTO THE **HAZARD!** CLEAR AWAY THAT PILE OF WITHERED, MAGGOTY BONES AND SIT DOWN! DID YOU BRING YOUR SHRUNKEN-EYE-BALL-SOOD-LICKS-CHARM? I WANT YOU TO BE WELL PREPARED FOR THE **HOWLIFTING HAIR-RAISER!** I'M ABOUT TO TELL! YOU'LL LIKE THIS ONE, I'M SURE... SO WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, LET'S BEGIN THE STORY CALLED...

## STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT!



DARK HAD SETTLED OVER THE DRAIN GROUNDS OF BETHWOOD, AND THE MISTY RAIN FELL WITH A DIABOLICAL PERSEVERANCE, COVERING ALL WITH A WEIRDNESS THAT WAS MAGNITUDE. MARTLEY DURING HUNCHED HIS SHOULDERS AGAINST THE CHILL, AND CURLED SOFTLY.





HE CURSED THE RAIN AND THE COLD. HE CURSED THE UNIFORMED GUARDS BESIDE HIM AND THE MINISTER BEFORE HIM. THE JIBBERING CROWD SURROUNDING HIM AND THE GNAWING FEAR INSIDE HIM! HE EVEN CURSED THE BODY LYING IN THE UNCOVERED COFFIN!



FROM BEHIND HIM, A FIGURE CRAWLED TO THE COFFIN AND PLAYFULLY FINGERED THE FACE OF THE CORPSE! NO ONE MADE A MOVE TO STOP HIM! HARTLEY QUIMS WAS HORRIFIED TO THE POINT OF NAUSEA.



THE FIGURE SCURRIED BACK TO THE CROWD. THE MINISTER SPOKE ON, UNINTERRUPTED, AND HARTLEY QUIMS LOWERED HIS EYES TO THE GUTTERING WAX CUNDLES...



...BIT OF A *SHOCK*, EH, GUY'NOR?

HARTLEY QUIMS TURNED TO LOOK AT THE STERN-FACED GUARD WHO HAD ADDRESSED HIM...

LORD, YES! THAT WAS HORRIBLE!



AYE! BUT IT'S IMPORTANT! Y'ELL SEE, AFTER Y'VE BEEN HERE A BIT?

ANOTHER FIGURE CRAWLED TO THE COFFIN. HE GAZED CURIOUSLY AT THE BODY, HIS EYES SAGGED. THEN, IMPULSIVELY, HE SLAPPED THE CORPSE ACROSS THE CHEEK!



GOOD HEAVENS! DID YOU SEE THAT?

AYE! WE LET THEM DO THAT! A FUNERAL IS A *THREAT* TO THESE POOR SOULS... AND IT HELPS US TO *CONTROL* THEM! WE USE IT AS A MEANS TO ENFORCE DISCIPLINE!



HARTLEY QUIMS BEGAN TO WAVER! HE SWORE AT HIMSELF FOR EVER HAVING ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF MASTER OF BETHNOR ASYLUM! IF HE HADN'T NEEDED THE MONEY...

DISCIPLINE!

AYE, GUY'NOR! IF THE INMATES DON'T *BEHAVE* THEMSELVES, WE GON'T LET THEM *ATTEND* THE NEXT FUNERAL! IT'S ABOUT THE *ONLY* WAY WE CAN *CONTROL* THEM, UNDERSTAFFED AS WE ARE!





THE COFFIN HAD AT LAST BEEN COVERED, YET A FEW OF THE INMATES RAN FORWARD TO LIFT THE LID SLIGHTLY AND PEER INQUISITIVELY INSIDE! THEN THE COFFIN WAS LOWERED INTO THE GROUND...

THANK GOD!  
IT'S OVER!

AYE! I GUESS YE'RE A BIT ~~HUNGRY~~ NOT HAVING A BITE TO EAT SINCE YE ARRIVED THIS AFTER NOON! WELL, WE'LL SOON FIX *THAT!*



THE THOUGHT OF FOOD HAD NEVER ENTERED HARTLEY'S MIND, BUT HE WALKED WITH THE GUARDS TO THE MESS HALL, WHICH STATED BOTH INMATES AND CUSTODIANS ALIKE...

YE MUST UNDERSTAND, SIR! THE INMATES AREN'T *INSANE*! FOR THE MOST PART, THEY'RE MERE *CHILDREN*! THEY JUST ACT AND THINK LIKE *LITTLE KIDS*!

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *MASTER* WHO PRE-CEDED *ME*?



OH, *WIM*, POOR SOUL! THE INMATES *KILLED* HIM WHEN HE TRIED TO TAKE AWAY ALL THEIR *FUNERAL PRIVILEGES*!

HARTLEY QUINN NERVOUSLY LIFTED THE FORK AND SPEARED A CHOICE PIECE OF STEAK. HE WAS ABOUT TO PLACE IT IN HIS MOUTH WHEN HIS GAZE DRIFTED OUT OVER THE TABLE. HIS HAND TREMBLED...



A HUNDRED GLARING EYES BURNED INTO HIS! A HUNDRED HATE-FILLED EYES WATCHED HIS EVERY MOVE.



SUDDENLY HE SAW THE SLOWLY FOOD THEY WERE EATING. HE GLANCED AT THE JUICY, TENDER MORREL OF STEAK ON HIS FORK AND THEN LOOKED AGAIN INTO THEIR VANDUSIOUS EYES. THE FORK CLATTERED TO THE TABLE AS HE ROSE UNSTEADILY TO HIS FEET...

I. I'M *NOT* VERY *HUNGRY*! IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME I. I THINK I'LL GO TO MY *ROOM*!

WELL... ALL RIGHT, *YOUNG* MIND IF I TALK *YET* STEAK?



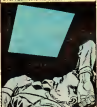
HARTLEY QUINN HURRIED FROM THE MESS HALL AS FAST AS HIS WOBBLING LEGS WOULD CARRY HIM, AND CLIMBED THE RICKETY STAIRS TO HIS ROOM! ONCE INSIDE, HE BOLTED THE PUMPY LOCK AND LEANED HEAVILY AGAINST THE DOOR...

THEY *HATE* ME! I COULD TELL! THEY WANT TO *KILL* ME TOO! THEY *HATE* ME!





HE THREW HIMSELF ONTO THE BED, SAZED FIERCELY THROUGH THE SKY-LIGHT AT THE SKY. THE RAIN HAD STOPPED. AND HE COOED...



SUDDENLY HE WAS SHAKENED BY THE GRASPING OF MANY HANDS! HE FELT A CLOTH BEING ROUGHLY SHOVED INTO HIS MOUTH!



HIS EYES BUGGED OPEN AND BEHOLD A SIGHT THAT FROZE HIS HEART-BEAT! A DOZEN MOURNERS SURROUNDED HIS BED, READILY TYING HIM WITH STOUT ROPES!



IN HORROR, HE FELT THEM LIFT HIM FROM THE BED AND CARRY HIM FROM THE BUILDING. QUIETLY THEY MOVED ACROSS THE COBBLESTONE COURTYARD, IN THE SHADOWS, PAST OTHER BUILDINGS...



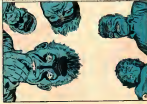
THEY REACHED THEIR DESTINATION, THE CARPENTER'S SHOP! AS HE WAS CARRIED INSIDE, HE SENSED A MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE AND HE CRANED HIS NECK THIS WAY AND THAT, THE BETTER TO SEE! IN THE DIM LIGHT, HIS EYES FELL UPON AN OPEN COFFIN!



A SOUND GURGLED IN HIS THROAT! HE TRIED TO BRY FREE... HE SCURMOGED AND TWISTED BUT HE WAS LIFTED AND THEN PLACED IN THE COFFIN! HIS BODY GAVE AN INVOLUNTARY SHUDDER OF REVULSION AND TEARS ROLLED FREELY FROM HIS EYES.



HE HEARD THE SHUFFLING OF MANY FEET, THE WHISPER OF CLOTH MUSTLING AGAINST CLOTH, AND THE SOFT SONGS OF SORROW. WAS THIS A GAME? WHAT WERE THEY GOING TO DO TO HIM? SUDDENLY, FROM ALL SIDES, THE MOURNERS LOOMED INTO VIEW.





IN HIS MIND'S EYE, VISIONS OF THE FUNERAL HE HAD WITNESSED ONLY A FEW HOURS BEFORE FLASHED BY! HE TREMBLED AT THE THOUGHT OF IT! THE COFFIN LID DESCENDED...



IN THE DEEPY BLACKNESS, HE CRIED OUT SILENTLY IN TERROR! WOULD THEY LET HIM SUFFOCATE? HE LISTENED... AND HEARD WHISLS OF PROTEST! WHAP! WAS BROUGHT!



HE HEARD THE INMATES CONVERSING IN LOW TONES. THEN, SUDDENLY, THE LID WAS REMOVED! WERE THEY GOING TO FREE HIM?



SURELY THEY COULD ONLY BE *PLAYING A GAME!* THERE WAS AN EXPECTANT QUIET, BROKEN ONLY BY THE SOUND OF SAWING WOOD! A FACE SUDDENLY LERRED INTO THE COFFIN AND JUST AS SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED! AND THEN THE COFFIN-LID WAS OVERHEAD! *THEY WERE PUTTING IT BACK ON!*



FACES APPEARED FROM ALL ANGLES! HAPPY FACES, SAD FACES, CURIOUS FACES, WORRIED FACES! DIFFERENT FACES, DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS... YET EACH ONE THE SAME AS ALL THE OTHERS!



THE SCOWS AND AARMS THAT FOLLOWED WERE ALL APPRECIATIVE! AND NO WONDER! THE LID NOW HAD A *WINDROW* THROUGH WHICH HE COULD RECEIVE AIR! OR WAS IT PUT THERE SO THE INMATES COULD *SEE* HIM BETTER? HE DIDN'T KNOW!



A HAND REACHED THROUGH THE OPENING AND FELT OF HIS CHEEK! HARTLEY DUMB CLOSED HIS EYES, BUT EVEN THEN HE HEARD THE PEOPLE BRUSHING AGAINST THE OUTSIDE OF THE COFFIN, SENSED THEIR HORRID HEADS FRAMED IN THE OPENING! A HAND PINCHED HIS NOSE!





HE HAD LOST ALL TRACK OF TIME. HE LAY THERE, MOTIONLESS, WHILE THE MOORING INMATES SLOWLY FILED BY PAYING THEIR 'LAST RESPECTS'. EACH TIME HE OPENED HIS EYES, A DIFFERENT FACE WAS PEERING INTO HIS. HE TRIED TO PRAY BUT HE COULDN'T REMEMBER THE WORDS...



FINALLY HE FELT THE COFFIN BEING LIFTED! WOULD THEY RETURN HIM TO HIS ROOM NOW? THEY HADN'T REALLY TRIED TO *HURT* HIM... THEY WERE MERELY PLAYING! *LITTLE CHILDREN*, THAT WAS ALL...

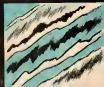
THE CEILING WAS MUCH CLOSER NOW. OBVIOUSLY, THE COFFIN WAS BEING CARRIED ON THEIR SHOULDERS! THE CEILING MOVED BY ABOVE HIM AND SOON HE WAS PASSED THROUGH THE DOORWAY INTO THE NIGHT.



SWEEP FOR A FEW MOMENTS, THE SKY WAS CLEAR. STARS TWINKLED BRIGHTLY, UNCONCERNED WITH THE GENUINE PASSENGER THAT WAS TAKING PLACE BELOW THEM. HE LISTENED TO THE SHUFFLING STEPS OF THE PROCESSION ON THE COBBLESTONES...



THEY WERE JUST LITTLE CHILDREN... JUST PLAYING A *GAME*! THEY WERE PROBABLY BRINGING HIM BACK TO HIS ROOM. HE SAW THE TOP OF A YARD BUILDING PASS SLOWLY BY ABOVE HIM. WASN'T THAT *HIS* BUILDING??? IT DISAPPEARED FROM VIEW.





AGAIN THERE WAS NOTHING BUT THE STAR-FILLED SKY ABOVE HIM. THAT *COULDN'T* HAVE BEEN THE BUILDING WHERE HIS ROOM WAS! HE LOOKED AGAIN AT THE SKY. CLOUDS WERE FORMING! STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT... HE COULDN'T REMEMBER THE REST...



THEY PASSED BENEATH A WROUGHT-IRON ARCHWAY... A GATE! AGAINST THE DARKENING SKY, HE TRIED TO SPELL THE LETTERS HE SAW. HE HAD TO READ THEM BACKWARDS. *C...E...M...*



HE FELT HIMSELF BEING LOWERED TO THE GROUND. A MOMENT LATER HE HEARD THE UNDISTAINABLE SOUND OF SHOVELS DIGGING INTO THE RAIN-BOARDED EARTH! THE REALIZATION UNDERMINED HIS LAST VESTIGE OF SELF-CONTROL... AND HE PAINTED...



A TREE PASSED BY OVERHEAD, ITS LEAVES WHISPERING IN THE WIND, ITS BRANCHES REVEALING GODD-SHE AS IT PASSED FROM HIS SIGHT! *WHERE WERE THEY TAKING HIM?* HE HAD LOST ALL SENSE OF DIRECTION. THEY WERE JUST CHILDREN... LITTLE CHILDREN... JUST LITTLE CHILDREN WHO HAD KILLED HIS PREDECESSOR...



HARTLEY GUMB'S HEART POUNDED TILL HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BURST THROUGH HIS CHEST! WERE THEY REALLY *SERIOUS*? HAD THEY FORGOTTEN HE WASN'T A *REAL* COMET? THEY WOULDN'T *BURY* HIM *ALIVE* WOULD THEY?



HARTLEY GUMB OPENED HIS EYES AND SAT UP IN BED! DROPS OF RAIN FROM A LEAK IN THE BAYLIGHT HIT HIS FACE. HE UNTANGLED HIS LEGS FROM THE MASS OF TWISTED SHEETS, PULLED THE CACKLING BEDCLOTHES FROM HIS MOUTH AND HURRAED A SON...





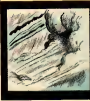
HE WIPE THE ASPIRATION FROM HIS HEAD AND SAVE PERVENT THANKS. THAT IT HAD ONLY BEEN A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE! HE LAY BACK ON THE PILLOW... RELAXED.



HARTLEY QUINN SMILED SOFTLY, EVERY FINGER OF HIS BEING TINGLING WITH RELIEF. HE LOOKED UP THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT AT THE MORNING STARS, AND IMAGINED THEM TO BE RELIEVED FOR HIM, TOO.



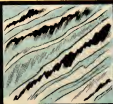
HE RECHIEVED THE POEM: STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT... AND THE TIME HE *KNEW* ALL THE WORDS! HE CLOSED HIS EYES MOMENTARILY AND MADE A WISH...



...AND WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES-AGAIN A FACE WAS DURNING DOWN AT HIM.



STARTLED, HARTLEY QUINN TRIED TO LEAP UP, BUT FOUNDHE COULDN'T MOVE! HE TRIED TO YELL, TO SCREAM, BUT COULDN'T! THE FACE DISAPPEARED...



...AND THEN A SHOVELFUL OF DIRT HIT HIM PLUSH IN THE FACE...

YEH, YEH... AMN'T THAT A DIRTY SHAME? JUST IN CASE SOME OF YOU CHARACTERS ARE A LITTLE BIT CONFUSED, HERE'S THE LOW-DOWN! HARTLEY WAS IN THE COFFIN ALL THE TIME! HE ONLY DREAMED HE WORE UP IN HIS ROOM! ACTUALLY, UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN HE FAINTED FOR A FEW MOMENTS,

HE SUBCONSCIOUSLY DREAMED THAT... E R... WHAT A MINUTE! WHEN HE WAS IN... NO... ER... HE DREAMED HE WAS AWAKE, WHEN... NO, THAT'S NOT - OH, THE DEVIL WITH IT!



THE  
END.



# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

WELL, WELL? SO VACATION TIME IS OVER...EH, KIDDING? WELL, LET'S REMIND YOU I'LL TELL YOU A VACATION TALK THAT WILL TICKLE YOUR GRABBY SPINE. WELCOME TO THE CRYPT OF TERROR, THIS IS YOUR HOST IN HOWLS, YOUR GRYFF-KEEPER, GUEST-SPOTTING IN VARIOUS MORBID MUCK-WAD WITH THE T.E.P.F.A.R.N. I CALL...

## WHILE THE CAT'S AWAY...



JOHN YOUNGER AND HIS PARTNER, FRANK WESTER, HAD BEEN WORKING THEIR LITTLE RACKET SUCCESSFULLY FOR ALMOST A YEAR. THEY'D OPENED A SMALL TRAVEL AGENCY DOWNTOWN, LINED THE WALLS WITH ATTRACTIVE POSTERS OF ROMANTIC FAR-AWAY SPOTS, AND PROCEEDED TO FLEECHE THEIR CUSTOMERS IN THE FOLLOWING FASHION. TAKE THE CASE OF MIRANDA CRUMM, A RICH OLD WIDOW. SHE'S COME TO THE T.E.P.F.A.R.N. AGENT TO ARRANGE HER VACATION

ON T.E.S. MRS CRUMM. BEHIND IS LONELY THIS TIME OF YEAR. WE'LL BE GLAD TO MAKE ALL THE NECESSARY RESERVATIONS FOR YOU

THANK YOU, MR. YOUNGER. THAT WILL BE FOR TWO WEEKS, STARTING THE TWELFTH...





AS OPERATORS OF A TRAVEL BUREAU, IT WAS EASY FOR MR. YOUNGER AND MR. WESTON TO EXTRACT THE NECESSARY INFORMATION FROM THEIR CUSTOMERS.



NATURALLY, NONE OF THEIR CUSTOMERS EVER SUSPECTED THE REAL REASON FOR THE VERY PERSONAL QUESTIONS THEY WERE ASKED...



AFTER THEY'D LEARNED EVERYTHING ABOUT THEIR PROSPECTIVE VACATIONERS THAT THEY NEEDED, THEY WOULD PROCEED NORMALLY...



AND THE HAPPY CUSTOMER WOULD SOON BE OFF ON THE VACATION THAT THE TRAVEL AGENCY HAD FULLY PLANNED FOR HER... BUT A NIGHT OR TWO LATER...



YES, RECORDED. ARMED WITH THE FACT THAT MIRANDA CRUMM WAS SOMEWHERE ON THE HIGH SEAS, SOUNDING FOR BERMUDA... THAT IF SHE COULD AFFORD SUCH A VACATION, SHE WAS OBVIOUSLY WELL-TO-DO... AND THAT, SINCE SHE LIVED ALONE, HER HOUSE WAS NOW EMPTY, JOHN YOUNGER AND FRANK WESTON LET THEMSELVES IN.



AND, UNDISTURBED, THEY RELIEVED THEIR TRAVELING CUSTOMER'S HOUSE OF ITS VALUABLES...



OF COURSE, POOR MISS CRUMM, WHEN SHE RETURNED FROM HER SOJOURN, GLADLY LOST HER ACQUIRED GUNNAR WHEN SHE SAW THAT HER HOUSE HAD BEEN RANSACKED...





WELL, HUH? NICE LITTLE RACKET, CH. FIGURE WHAT BETTER WAY COULD THERE BE OF FINDING A PROSPECTIVE HOUSE TO ROB THAN BY LEARNING THAT THE RICH OCCUPANTS WERE GOING AWAY ON A VACATION? AND WHAT BETTER WAY OF LEARNING IT THAN BY ARRANGING THE WHOLE THING YOURSELF? SO NOW YOU KNOW FRANKIE AND JOHNNY'S LITTLE RACKET, NOW READ ON AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM...

ONE DAY, JOHN YOUNGER GOT A STRANGE PHONE CALL...

IS THIS THE F.B.I. TRAVEL AGENCY?

THAT'S RIGHT. THIS IS MR. YOUNGER SPEAKING.

I'D LIKE YOU TO ARRANGE A TWO WEEK VACATION FOR ME, MR. YOUNGER. I'VE BEEN WORKING VERY HARD LATELY, AND...

DO YOU HAVE ANY FAR-FLUNG PLACE IN MIND, SIR?



I'M THINKING OF FLYING TO LONDON, SO YOU THINK YOU COULD GET ME PLANE RESERVATIONS... SAY... FOR THE TWENTH?

OF COURSE, SIR? IN WHOSE NAME DO I MAKE THE RESERVATIONS?

ER... MY NAME IS T. CHARLES KIRKMAN?

AND WHERE DO YOU LIVE, MR. KIRKMAN?

I LIVE AT 711 WOODS ROAD...

711... WOODS ROAD. FINE, AND NOW, IF YOU'LL ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS, MR. KIRKMAN... FOR OUR FILES.



DO YOU LIVE ALONE, MR. KIRKMAN?

THERE IS NO ONE LIVING IN MY PLACE WITH ME, MR. YOUNGER, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN...

ALL RIGHT, MR. KIRKMAN, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING, ER... WILL YOU PICK UP YOUR RESERVATIONS HERE?

NO, MR. YOUNGER, YOU'D BETTER HAVE THEM TO ME. JUST TELL ME HOW MUCH THEY'LL BE AND I'LL SEND YOU THE MONEY...





AFTER MR. YOUNGER HAD COMPLETED THE ARRANGEMENTS WITH MR. KINGMAN, HE HUNG UP AND TURNED TO HIS PARTNER.

"711 WOODS ROAD? THAT'S OUT IN THE SUBURBS, ISN'T IT, FRANK?"

"YEAH! *SUB* ESTATES OUT THERE! WHY?"



"WHAT LUCK? SOME OLD GUY JUST CALLED. WANTS US TO ARRANGE FOR A PLANE TRIP TO EQUADOR FOR HIM. HE MUST BE *LOADED*! AND HE SAID THERE WAS *NO ONE* LIVING WITH HIM, TOO!"

"ANOTHER TUCKER? GREAT! LET'S GET BUSY AND GET THOSE RESERVATIONS! AFTER HE'S GONE, WE'LL GO OUT TO HIS PLACE AND *CLEAN IT* OUT..."



THE TICKETS WERE OBTAINED AND MAILED OUT TO MR. KINGMAN. THEN, ON THE TWENTIETH, MR. YOUNGER CALLED THE AIRLINE.

"THIS IS THE *POW* TRAVEL AGENCY. WE JUST WANT TO CHECK. DID A MR. T. CHARLES KINGMAN TAKE OFF ON FLIGHT 12 TO EQUADOR?"

"JUST A MOMENT, I'LL SEE. YES! MR. KINGMAN WAS *ABOARD*."



HE HUNG UP, GRINNING...

"HE'S *GONE*? THE *COAST* IS *CLEAR*."

"WE'LL TAKE THE *STATION* WAGON TONIGHT, FRANK. THIS PROMISED TO BE A *SUB* HAVE."



THAT NIGHT, YOUNGER AND WESTON DROVE OUT INTO THE COUNTRY...

"*WOODS ROAD*? THIS IS IT? TURN IN..."

"SURE IS *LOVELY* OUT HERE AT NIGHT..."



THEIR STATION WAGON BOUNCED AND WEAVED DOWN A GERMAL TREE-LINED ROTTED ROAD.

"*SOME* ESTATE?"

"TAKE IT *EASY*? *SOME* OF THESE PLACES ARE A LITTLE RUN DOWN, BUT THE OLD FAMILY HEIR-LOOMS ARE *PRICELESS*! KEEP GOING!"



FINALLY THE ROAD ENDS, AND THE STATION WAGON'S HEADLIGHTS FELL UPON AN OLD, TIME-WORN, PAINT-PEELED ROTTED BARRISON...

"THE *GUY* *OWNED* US, WHO WOULD LIVE IN THAT *GUT-FRAT*?"

"LET'S TAKE A *LOOK*... JUST TO MAKE *SURE*?"





THEY STEPPED FROM THEIR BUSTON-  
MASON AND CROSSED THE WILDLY  
OVERGROWN LAWN. FRANK'S FLASH-  
LIGHT FELL UPON THE FADED SIGN.

WHAT'S IT  
SAID?

'BEWARE!  
TRESPASSER'S  
WILL BE PERSECUTED'  
HAY! THAT'S A  
LAUGH!



THEY CLIMBED THE ROTTED STAIRS  
THAT CREAKED UNDER THEIR WEIGHT  
AND STOOD UPON THE COLUMNED  
PORCH BEFORE THE MASSIVE DECAYED  
DOOR.

HEY, FRANK! THIS  
PLACE GIVES ME THE  
GUEES! THERE'S NO  
ONE LIVING HERE!  
O'HON! LET'S  
GO...

HOLD IT!  
THE DOOR'S  
UNLOCKED.



THE OLD DOOR SQUEALED OPEN ON  
RUSTED HINGES.

NOT A STICK OF  
FURNITURE!  
NO THINGS! NOTHING  
BUT A WILD  
GOOSE CHASE!

O'HON!



THE TWO MEN WENT FROM ROOM TO ROOM THROUGH  
THE ONCE PROUD MANSION, NOW BAST LAGEN AND CON-  
WEEBED WITH TIME...

DESERTED! NO ONE'S  
LIVED HERE FOR  
YEARS...

THIS DOOR LEADS TO THE  
CELLAR. WE'LL TAKE A  
LOOK, AND THEN LEAVE...



THEY DESCENDED THE WINDING STONE STEPS INTO THE  
DAMP CELLAR.

FRANK! WHAT'S  
THAT?

A METAL DOOR!  
PROLOCKED! AND  
THERE'S A SIGN  
ON IT...



THEY READ THE FRESHLY PAINTED SIGN.

WE...HE  
DOES  
LIVE  
HERE!  
LOOK!

SOME AWAY ON VACATION.  
WILL BE BACK IN TWO WEEKS.

**WARNING  
KEEP OUT**

TCK

TCK!  
T.  
CHARLES  
KINGMAN!



THE TWO MEN LOOKED AT EACH OTHER...

HE MUST BE ONE OF THOSE  
HIGH OLD EGGENTINES. I'LL  
BET HE'S GOT A FORTUNE  
HIDDEN IN THERE...

STAND BACK!  
I'M GOING TO  
BASH THE  
LOCK...





THE DARK OLD CELLAR REVERBERATED WITH THE SOUND OF THE PADLOCK SPLITTING OPEN UNDER YOUNGER'S ANGRY ASSAULT. THE HUGE METAL DOOR SWUNG WIDE.



THE TWO MEN MOVED THROUGH THE LIBRARY INTO THE CAVERN-LIKE PASSAGE BEYOND.



TUNNELS BRANCHED OFF IN ALL DIRECTIONS. THE TWO MEN WANDERED DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE CARCERISED MAZE.



AS THE DOOR AT THE END OF ONE OF THE TUNNELS SWUNG OPEN, YOUNGER AND WESTON SCREAMED...



THEY RAN WILDLY BACK THROUGH THE NETWORK OF TUNNELS.



EVERY TIME THEY CAME TO A DEAD-END, A DOOR SWUNG WIDE.





HOURS PASSED AND YOUNGER AND WESTON REALIZED THAT THEY WERE HOPELESSLY LOST IN THE MAZE OF UNDERGROUND PASSAGEWAYS, HOUNDED BY THE THINGS THAT SPURGE FROM EACH TUNNEL—END DOOR AS THEY CAME UPON IT.



DAYS PASSED. THE TWO MEN COVERED IN THE DARKNESS, TOO FRIGHTENED TO MOVE, WATCHING THE CREATURES PASS BEARBY, SEARCHING FOR THEM.



IT WAS ALMOST TWO WEEKS LATER. TWO WEEKS OF DEEPER HORROR, TRAPPED IN THE NETWORK OF TUNNELS, STAYING ALIVE BY CATCHING BATS AND EATING THEM RAW. THAT JOHN YOUNGER AND FRANK WESTON CRAWLED INTO THE BOOK-LINED LIBRARY ONCE MORE.



...AND OUT INTO THE COOL NIGHT AIR... OUT ONTO THE PORCH...



...OUT INTO THE MOONLIGHT THAT GLISTENED ON THEIR FRIGHT-WHITERED HAIR, AND AS THEY CRAWLED PAST THE OLD MAN WITH THE WALRUS IN HIS HAND, WHO'D JUST RETURNED FROM HIS VACATION...



THEY NEVER EVEN LOOKED UP AT ME? NO, THERE THEY GO, AFTER SPENDING TWO WEEKS IN THE DRYPT OF TERROR? YEP? THAT WAS ME, THE DRYPT-KEEPER. I O.K., USING AN ALIAS OF COURSE, WHO CALLED THE F.B.I. TRAVEL BUREAU? I MATTER? I CAN'T GO ON A VACATION, TOO? BUT, WHY FORSAKOR, YOU ASK? WELL, I WENT DOWN TO VISIT THE JUVAR FRIST, TO BRUSH UP ON THE LATEST METHODS OF SHORR-ING HUMAN HEADS. I DRYPT-ON SOME TIME. I'LL GIVE YOU A SMALL IDEA OF WHAT I'VE LEARNED. NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO V.K. BYE!





**WE AT E.C. ARE PROUDEST  
OF OUR SCIENCE - FICTION  
MAGAZINES! LOOK FOR...**



**LOOK FOR  
THESE SEALS  
WHEN YOU BUY!**

THEY ARE YOUR ASSURANCE OF TOP  
ENTERTAINMENT...FOUND ONLY ON  
THE FOLLOWING E.C. MAGAZINES:

TALES FROM THE CRYPT  
HAUNT OF FEAR - VAULT OF HORROR  
SHOCK SUSPENSORIES  
CRIME SUSPENSORIES  
TWO-FISTED TALES - FRONTLINE COMBAT  
MAD  
WEIRD SCIENCE - WEIRD FANTASY  
AND THE 230 ANNUAL ANTHOLOGIES  
WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY  
TWO-FISTED ANNUAL TALES OF TERROR

## **SUDDEN DEATH!**

He slipped the gun into his pocket; the metal felt hot against his thigh. Then Curt Benbow peered at the body sprawled at his feet. The cellar was almost pitch-dark; he could barely make out the outflung arms and the gaping chest wound darkening the shirt of the man he had just killed.

Benbow walked quickly across the uneven cement floor, to the axe he had hidden. He picked it up, hefted it for a moment, then strode back to the spot where the body lay. Glancing up, he located the cross-beams stretching darkly across the ceiling. An old-fashioned cellar like this was perfect for Benbow's scheme. He'd hack through those ancient beams until the ceiling started to sag, then make his getaway. In minutes the supports would crack... the ceiling would come crashing down upon the dead man, making it appear that the victim had been killed by the sudden collapse of the supporting beams.

With a crunching sound, the axe bit into the dry wood. Again and again the metal flashed. Benbow could see the rafters beginning to crack, the heavy plaster sagging perceptibly. Perspiring from exertion, Benbow stopped to catch his breath. A few more swings of the axe would do it. Spitting on his palms, to ease the sting of the blisters on his skin, Benbow started swinging again.

The cross-beam suddenly broke, with no warning. And before he could



dodge out of the way, Benbow felt himself being buried under the cascading weight. He went down, managed somehow to turn over on his back . . . then the great blackened beams came crashing over him.

When he came to, his face was covered with plaster-dust. He blinked and tried to move. With a gasp of horror, Benbow realized he had no feeling in his arms or legs. Several huge chunks of wood rested across his body, almost completely covering him. He moaned . . . the sudden collapse of the ceiling had pinned him here to the murky cellar floor, as incapable of motion as a paralyzed insect on a biologist's slide!

Benbow caught his breath. In the dark he saw eyes glittering at him. Ten eyes . . . maybe a dozen. And they were coming closer, scuttling across the floor. With a spasm of terror, Benbow realized the place was full of rats!

Now they were running over his immobilized feet, held there so motionless by the ponderous weight of the fallen beams. With a scream of agony that reverberated grotesquely through the old basement, Benbow felt a shattering explosion of pain . . . heard the ghoulish gnashing of teeth tearing at his exposed flesh. He tried to thrash about, to free himself from this hideous torture . . . but Benbow knew he was trapped. The rats were already chewing ravenously at his ankles, chomping at his meat and tearing it loose in great raw strips.

Benbow prayed for sudden death, hoping that his heart would stop beating before the savage rats completed their grisly task. Before they had completely ripped Benbow's feet from his body with their hideous razor-sharp fangs!



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# THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

**JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!** There - I said it O.K! Now stop twisting my arm and leave me with my column!

Concubines, ghosts! Here, to storm the lowest ceiling, are the lowest publications in our **HORROR HIT PARADE**

**BLACK UP YOUR BROTHERS IN YOUR OLD  
KIT BAG  
COME JOSEPHINE, TRY MY NEW GUILLOTINE  
SQUIMM' THROUGH THE TERNEN  
DON'T MAIM ME  
I'M GONNA WASH THAT BLOOD RIGHT OUTTA  
MY LAIR  
THEY'VE GOT AN AWFUL LOT OF COFFINS  
IN BRAZIL  
BUTCHER ME  
COMIN' THROUGH THE LYE  
THE SCAR-MANGLED ANNA  
I LOATHED YOU AS I NEVER LOATHED BEFORE  
WILD HEARES  
SEVEN LONELY GRAVES**

The above terrorisms taken were submitted by Eddie Turner of Baldwin City, Kansas; Joe Mulkey II of Detroit, Mich.; Michael Page of Springdale, Maine, and Bonnie Bourgeois and Albery Carey of New Orleans, La.

Anthony Pevens of Monterey, Calif. suggests the following **VAMPIRE VOCALISTS**

**MURY COMO  
THE CHILLS MOOS  
FRANKIE FAIN  
BONEY BENNETT  
NAT' KING CINQUEL  
VIC THE MOAN**



Our **FUTURO PROVERBS** department inspired the following one-track-mind gems

**A ROLLING HEAD GATHERS NO MOTHS**

Milo Thompson  
Great Falls, Mont.

**A ROLLING GHOUL GATHERS NO VAMPIRES**

Tim Smith  
Houston, Texas

**A WALKING CORPSE GATHERS NO MAGGOTS**

Michael Reynolds  
Somerset, Pa.

And now for some poems by **Y-Y-Y-E-E-O-O**  
U-U-W! THE THIRD ANNUAL TALES OF TERROR  
E.C. A HORROR ANTHOLOGY . 122 PAGES OF  
CHILLS REPRINTS FROM 1922 . STILL AVAIL-  
ABLE IS: YOUR NAME YOUR ADDRESS NOW  
LEGGO, AWEADY!

So, as I was saying, some **PERVERTED POETRY**

**I Want a Ghoul  
Just Like the Ghoul  
That Batted Dear Old Dad  
She Was a Fiend  
And the Only Ghoul**



**That Deadly Sweet Head  
A Real Old-fashioned Ghoul  
With Long Sharp Claws,  
Had a Scaly  
But She Was After Paw's  
I Want a Ghoul  
Just Like the Ghoul  
That Batted Dear Old Dad**

Nelson Brydwell  
Oklahoma City, Okla.

**We've had friends  
Who are no more...  
They lie beneath  
Our yellow floor  
We keep our friends  
As you can see  
We share their bones  
With company  
We dig them up  
And on a stick  
Share the best friends  
We ever had**



Bonnie Lee Warner  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

**One bright day in the middle of the night  
Two dead boys got up to fight  
Back to back, they faced each other  
Pulled out knives and shot each other  
A ghoul policeman heard the noise  
And came and killed these two dead boys!**

Michael Griggs  
St. Louis, N. Y.

**A little boy that was so cruel  
Dads I know his father was a ghoul.  
His mother, a vampire  
His sisters, zombies  
His brother, a werewolf, who ate raw humans**

Tony Cohen  
Pawson, N. J.

**Oh give me a grave  
Where the ghosts, they all were  
Where the ghouls and the werewolves all play  
Where there's a horrible rest  
And a discouraging stench  
And the shreds are happy all day**

Larry and Betty John  
Washington, D. C.

And now, in closing g-g-h-o-u-l-l-a-a-a-oh! **JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!** (Not that one, stupid--ad!) **THE THIRD ANNUAL TALES OF TERROR** (Not that one, stupid--ad!) **SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE** (Not one, stupid--ad!) **SO RELEASE YOUR HOLD FROM MY JUGULAR VEIN AND I'LL TELL THEM TO THIS OR ANY OTHER E.C. MAG** No FOR SIX ISSUES THE ADDRESS FOR BUREAU OF TALES OF TERROR ORDERING AS WELL AS FAN MAIL, IS

The Vault-Keeper  
Room 706, Dept. 34  
223 Lafayette Street  
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.

**(TO JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB SEE THE INSIDE FRONT COVER)**



HERE'S A WARMING LITTLE  
TERROR-TALE. I CALL IT...

# SMOKE WRINGS



HUBERT TILLINGS, A SMALL, MIDDLE-AGED BESPECTACLED MAN, BUSHTY BALDING, HAD WAITED UNEASILY IN THE RECEPTION ROOM OF THE B-V-G-S-O. ADVERTISING AGENCY, CRADLING HIS SHAGGY BRIEFCASE ON HIS LAP. FOR THREE LONG HOURS HE'D LOOKED UP EACH TIME THE RECEPTIONIST'S SWITCHBOARD HAD BUZZED, ONLY TO SEE HER SMILE AND SHAKE HER HEAD. FINALLY, TOWARD CLOSING TIME, WHEN HUBERT HAD JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP ALL HOPE OF SEEING ANYONE ABOUT HIS WONDERFUL, IDEA, THE RECEPTIONIST NODDED TO HIM...

MR. TILLINGS! MISS JACKSON  
WILL SEE YOU NOW.

MISS JACKSON? WHY... WHY...  
OH, DEAR! A MOMENT!



HUBERT TILLINGS WAS THE SHY, RETICENT, SELF-CONSCIOUS TYPE. HIS SLIGHT BUILD AND RELATIVELY UNATTRACTIVE FEATURES, TOGETHER WITH THIS SHYNESS, HAD FORCED HIM TO GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT EVER KNOWING A WOMAN. WOMEN FRIGHTENED HIM.

MR. TILLINGS MOVED SLOWLY DOWN THE HALL TO THE THIRD DOOR ON THE LEFT. GRIPPING HIS BRIEFCASE UNTIL THE KNUCKLES ON HIS HANDS TURNED WHITE, HE RAFFPED SOFTLY AND ENTERED.

MISS JACKSON IS THE PERSON  
TO SEE, MR. TILLINGS. SHE'S IN  
CHARGE OF THE LLAMA CIGARETTE  
ACCOUNT. GO RIGHT IN. THIRD  
DOOR ON YOUR LEFT.

TH-THANK  
YOU, MISS!



MR. TILLINGS?

Y-YES!





LORNA JACKSON WAS THE TYPICAL CAREER WOMAN TYPE... SMARTLY DRESSED... COULD BE ATTRACTIVE... BRISK AND BUSINESSLIKE... SHE STOOD BEHIND A METICULOUSLY NEAT DESK... MOTIONED MR. TELLINGS TO A CHAIR BESIDE IT...



SIT DOWN, MR. TELLINGS. I'M VERY BUSY, SO MAKE IT BRIEF. WHAT IS THIS IDEA YOU HAVE?

WELL, MISS JACKSON, IT'S... SOMETHING NEW... SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN THE FORM OF BILLBOARDS...

MR. TELLINGS OPENED HIS BRIEFCASE AND SPREAD OUT A SHEAF OF SKETCHES ON MISS JACKSON'S DESK.

VERY SIMPLE, MISS JACKSON. THE SMOKE RINGS WOULD NOT BE SMOKE AT ALL! THEY'D BE STEAM.

STEAM?



HUBERT POINTED TO HIS CRUDE DRAWINGS...

THAT'S RIGHT! STEAM! SEE? THIS CHAMBER CONTAINING WATER WOULD BE HEATED, AND THE RESULTANT STEAM COLLECTED HERE. THEN WHEN ENOUGH PRESSURE IS BUILT UP THIS VENT WOULD AUTOMATICALLY OPEN AND

DID YOU SAY, SIMPLE, MR. TELLINGS?



MISS JACKSON CAME AROUND FROM BEHIND HER DESK. SHE SMILED WARMLY, BENDING OVER REFULLED MR. TELLINGS SO THAT HER HEAVY PERFUME BLANKETED HIM.

HOWEVER, I MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN YOUR, MR. TELLINGS. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE ME TO DINNER?

WELL, WHY NOT, MISS JACKSON? I'D BE DELIGHTED.



LORNA STUDIED MR. TELLINGS AS HE STAMMERED THROUGH THE SPEECH HE'D CAREFULLY REHEARSED. LORNA DISMISSED MEN. THEY HAD ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES... ALL THE HIGH POSITIONS... MEN STOOD IN HER WAY...



...AND THE RESULT WOULD BE A HUGE SIGN OF A MAN, OR WOMAN, YOU LIKE... HOLDING A PACK OF CIGARETTES, AND CALMLY BLOWING SMOKE RINGS OUT OVER TIMES SQUARE.

HUH? WHAT? DID YOU SAY SMOKE RINGS? NOW?

IT JUST LOOKS COMPLICATED, MISS JACKSON. REALLY, IT IS QUOTE SIMPLE! I'VE ALREADY BUILT A SMALL-SCALE WORKING MODEL, AND

I'M I'M AWFULLY SORRY, MR. TELLINGS. I REALLY DON'T THINK WE'D BE INTERESTED IN YOUR IDEA, HOWEVER...



SHE RAN HER HAND SLOWLY OVER HIS BALDING HEAD, CATCHING HIS SPRY HAIR BETWEEN HER FINGERS. HER SPEECH WAS NOW ON HIS FLUSHED CHEEK.



CALL ME LORNA...

AND AND YOU CAN CALL ME H-HUBERT?



LORNA AND HUBERT HAD DINNER IN A ROMANTIC LITTLE RESTAURANT JUST DOWN THE BLOCK FROM THE B.Y.O.B.'S OFFICE. ALL DURING THE MEAL, SHE CHATTED WITH HIM GAILY, SUGGESTIVELY, ASKING HIM QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS LIFE, SO OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED IN HIM...

LORNA'S HAND STOLE ACROSS THE TABLE... REACHING FOR HUBERT'S... CARRESSING IT...



HUBERT HESITATED. HE FELT HIS HEART BEAT FASTER, HIS BLOOD RUSH TO HIS CHEEKS. WAS HE *DREAMING*? WAS ALL THIS *REAL*? *HET* HUBERT TILLINGS? HE SLIPPED PAST LAURA INTO HER LUXURIOUSLY FURNISHED APARTMENT...



LORNA KNELT ON THE HUGE SECTIONAL BESIDE HUBERT... PASSING HER LIPS... WHISPERING...





IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, LORNA SAW A GREAT DEAL OF HUBERT. SHE ALSO SAW A GREAT DEAL OF THE BIG WHEELS IN THE AGENCY...



THIS IS A **FABULOUS** **SOMEONE** **MISS JACKSON**. **FABULOUS**. THE **WAGE** & **RAISE** AND A **PROMOTION** FOR YOU. **PLUS A NICE BONUS.**

THANKS, H.B.!

ON HER DATES WITH HUBERT, LORNA KEPT REPORTING ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING WITH HIS IDEA...



NOTHING FET, TILLY. BUT I'M **WORKING** ON IT!

THAT'S **SWEET** OF YOU, LORNA!

DURING THE DAY, LORNA WOULD VISIT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE...



THE **SIGN** WILL **COVER** THE **FACE** OF THAT BUILDING, REACHING **FOUR STORIES** HIGH. THE **STEAM MECHANISM** WILL BE **HOUSED** IN TWO FLOORS OF **PRE-PROOFED** OFFICES **BEHIND** THE **SIGN**...

VERY GOOD, H.B.

AND AT NIGHT, THE **DESTRUCTION** **SITE**.



LORNA, THEY'RE **BUILDING** A **BIG SIGN** OVER ON **TIMES SQUARE**. THAT **ISN'T** OUR **'SMOKE-RING SIGN'**. IS IT?

I **WANTED** TO **SURPRISE** YOU **HOW** YOU'VE **SPOILED** IT.



YOU **SOLD** THEM **ON** THE **IDEA**?

OH—HURRY!



HOW—HOW MUCH DO WE **GET** FOR IT, LORNA?

NOTHING, FET, DEAR. THEY **WANT** TO **WAIT** UNTIL IT'S **READY** TO **OPERATE**.

THEN, ONE DAY, HUBERT WROTE UP TO READ IN HIS MORNING PAPER...



"ALL **AMA CIGARETTES** TO **UNVEIL** **ROSE** **NEW** **ADVERTISING** **INNOVATION** ON **TIMES** **SQUARE** **TONIGHT** **AT** **10 PM**." WHY IT'S **FURNISHED** MY **'SMOKE-RING SIGN'**

HASTILY HE **PHONED** LORNA...



I **MEANT** TO **TELL** YOU **LAST** **NIGHT**, **DEAR**, BUT IT **SLIP**. **RIGHT**, **LORNA**. **FEED** MY **MIND**. **MEET** ME **TONIGHT** **AT** **NINE** **BENEATH** **THE** **SIGN**. I **HAVE** **GOOD** **NEWS**...

THAT NIGHT, AT NINE SHARP, HUBERT WAITED BELOW THE DRAPED SIGN THAT LOOKED FOUR STORES HIGH OVER TIMES SQUARE...





LORNA CAME AT ALMOST NINE-THIRTY. SHE TOOK HIS HAND AND LED HIM INTO THE DESERTED OFFICE BUILDING...



THEY WENT UP THE BACK STAIRS...



LORNA UNLOCKED THE FIREPROOF DOOR TO THE BOILER-FLOORED OFFICE BEHIND THE SIGN...



LORNA PRESSED A SWITCH. THE HUGE STEEL LID OF THE STEAM-KETTLE-LIKE CHAMBER SWUNG OPEN BELOW THEM.



LORNA MOVED TOWARD HUBERT, HER EYES BLAZING.



LORNA PUSHED, HUBERT TILTING FLAILED, THEN PLUMBED DOWNWARD, INTO THE OPEN STEAM CHAMBER FILLED WITH BUBBLING, SCALDING WATER.





LORNA STARED DOWN AT THE SINGING, STEAMING, LIQUID-FILLED TANK...

AND THEY'LL WONDER HOW YOU GOT INTO THE TANK. THEY'LL THINK YOU WERE A PORNICITY MAD BAKING...WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE...

LORNA PRESSED THE SWITCH. THE LID SWUNG SHUT.

THEY'RE WAITING FOR ME. TILLY! THIS IS MY SHOW!

SHE SLIPPED OUT OF THE OFFICE AND DOWN THE BACK STAIRS INTO THE JAM-PACKED SQAURE...

AND HERE SHE COMES, FOLKS...THE GAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS WONDERFUL DISPLAY. LORNA JACKSON...

LORNA STOOD ALONE UPON THE SPEAKER'S PLATFORM, ACKNOWLEDGING THE CROWD'S WILD CHEERING. THE GRAPES COVERING THE SIGN FELL AWAY, REVEALING A MAN'S HEAD...LIPS PURSED...IN ONE HAND, A PACK OF SP. LLAMAS...IN THE OTHER, A LIT CIGARETTE JUST COMING OUT OF HIS MOUTH...

OHAY, LORNA, IT'S ALL YOURS.

SP. LLAMAS  
The cigarette companion tobacco!

LORNA PRESSED THE REMOTE CONTROL SWITCH THAT ACTIVATED THE STEAM MECHANISM...THE PRESSURE BUILT UP...THE VENT OPENED...AND...

LOOK! WORK! A SMOKE-RING!

LLAMAS  
The sign of good tobacco!

ONE AFTER ANOTHER, LIVE-STEAM SMOKE-RINGS POPPED FROM THE PURSED LIPS OF THE MAN PAINTED ON THE HUGE SIGN. AND THEN, STRANGELY, THE SMOKE-RINGS SHOOTING OUT OVER THE CROWD SPIRALED DOWNWARD, BAKING LORNA WITH THEIR SEARING HEAT...BLISTERING...BURNING...STEERING HER ALIVE.

FELOWN!

GOOD LORD?

CHOCKE?

HEH,HEH! THAT'S A HOT ONE, EH, KIDDIEST! JUST SHOWS TO GO YOU... A GOLD POTATO USUALLY ENDS UP BAKED, BY THE TIME THEY SHUT OFF THE CRAZY BILLBOARD AND GOT TO LORNA, FOURTEEN LIVE-STEAM SMOKE-RINGS HAD CRASHED DOWN OVER HER, LIKE A CHILD'S FING-TOES, COOKING HER TO A LOBSTER RED BLOB OF BLISTERED FLESH. WHAM... WHICH REMINDS ME, I'M HUNGRY!

HOW ABOUT FOOT WELL...THE OLD WIFEY IS WAITING TO FEED YOU A PARTY TALE OF TERROR FROM HER GRUDGY CAGLEBRO... SO...BYE,NOW!



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

WEE, WEE! AND NOW THAT THE GREEK FROM THE CRYPT AND THE VACUUM FROM THE FLOOD HAVE ENTER-TAINED YOU, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO WIND UP P.E.'S FIVE-PERIODICAL WITH ANOTHER DELICIOUS DISH OF DELICIOUS DOGGED UP IN MY STUPID CAULDRON, BASED ON A FAVORITE RECKING RECIPE OF MINE. YES, HORROR-HUMBERT HOBBS, IT'S YOUR HOSTESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE OLD WITCH, READY TO FEED YOU THE POKE, PARE I CALL...

## WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

DOCTOR JAMES CROTTY AND LAWYER HILLARD WALKER STOOD IN THE MARBLE PORCH OF THE FARMER MANSION AND SURVEYED THE CROWDED LIVING ROOM...

LOOK AT 'EM, DOG! LIKE PICTURES... AND THEY WAITING AROUND FOR OLD MAN FARMER TO DIE... WAITING TO SNOOP DOWN AND POKE CLEAN THE OLD BOY'S FORTUNE AS SOON AS HE GARPS HIS LAST BREATH.

...AND THEY DON'T HAVE LONG TO WAIT EITHER, WALKER. HE'S ABOUT DONE. HIS HEART IS READY TO GIVE OUT ANY MINUTE.



DOCTOR CROTTY AND LAWYER WALKER TURNED FROM THE LIVING ROOM PACKED WITH RICH OLD HEROLD FARMER'S RELATIVES, AND CLIMBED THE LONG WINDING CARPETED STAIRCASE...

IN FACT, WALKER, ONE GOOD SHOCK WILL DO IT. ONE GOOD EMOTIONAL UPHEAVAL WILL MEAN THE OLD MAN'S DEATH.

WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THE CHANCE, DOG. I'LL DO THE TALK-ING. I'LL TRY TO TELL HIM AS GENTLY AS POSSIBLE...





THE DOCTOR AND THE LAWYER  
PAUSED BEFORE THE AILING MIL-  
LINAIRE'S BEDROOM DOOR...

I DON'T THINK  
WE OUGHT TO GO  
FARROWING WITH  
IT, WALKER! I'M  
AFRAID HIS  
HEART WON'T  
STAND THE  
NEWS, NO  
LESS THE

WE'VE GOT TO,  
DOC. IT'S THE  
ONLY THING WE  
CAN DO! OTHER-  
WISE THEY'LL  
GET IT ALL...  
HIS WHOLE  
FORTUNE!



HAROLD PARKER, ONE OF THE RICHEST  
MEN IN THE COUNTRY, SAT DOZ-  
ING IN HIS LUXURIOUS BED. HE  
STIRRED, PAINFULLY, AS THE DOOR  
TO HIS BEDROOM OPENED SILENTLY...



HAROLD?  
YOU  
AWAKE?

NO?  
HARDLY!  
OH! IT'S POOL  
MILLARD  
JAMES. COME  
IN!

DOCTOR CROTTY AND LAWYER WALKER  
CROSSED THE LUSHLY CARPETED  
BEDROOM TO THE OLD MAN'S SIDE...

SEEMS LIKE EVERY-  
BODY'S COME TO SEE  
THE OLD MAN WORSE.  
PASS OUT OF THE  
PICTURE, EH,  
MILLARD JAMES?

YES, HAROLD.  
YOUR WHOLE  
FAMILY'S  
DOWN THERE.  
WAITING?



OLD MAN PARKER SMILED WARMLY...

SURE IS APOE OF 'EM. SURE IS  
NICE T'KNOW SOMEBODY CARES.  
DOES A BODY GOOD T'KNOW  
HE'S LOVED.

HAROLD, YOU CAN'T  
GO ON BELIEVING  
THAT! IT ISN'T RIGHT!  
IT ISN'T TRUE!



THE SMILE ON HAROLD PARKER'S FACE FADED. HE  
STARED AT HIS TRUSTED LAWYER...

WHAT ISN'T TRUE,  
WALKER? WHAT ARE  
YOU SAYING?

THOSE PEOPLE DOWN  
THERE. THEY'RE NOT HERE  
BECAUSE THEY CARE ABOUT  
YOU. BECAUSE THEY LOVE YOU.



DOCTOR CROTTY PUT HIS HAND ON LAWYER WALKER'S  
ARM...

PLEASE, MILLARD. IT'S TOO  
LATE TO TELL HAROLD THESE  
THINGS! HE HADN'T GOT VERY  
LONG! LET HIM DIE IN  
PEACE!

WHAT THINGS?  
WHAT ARE YOU  
TELLING ME,  
WALKER? SPEAK  
UP! WHAT'S THIS  
ALL ABOUT?



Mrs PARKER'S LIFE-LONG FRIEND AND LEGAL ADVISOR  
SHRUGGED...

I JUST CAN'T SEE YOU MAKING A  
FOOL OF YOURSELF, HAROLD. I JUST  
CAN'T SEE YOU PASSING AWAY, LEAV-  
ING YOUR MONEY TO THOSE...THOSE  
LEECHES...AND BELIEVING THEY  
LOVED YOU...

PLEASE, DON'T  
MILLARD. UP,  
GENTLY!  
GO ON,  
WALKER!





MILLARD WALKER'S VOICE WAS GENTLE... SOOTHING... THE VOICE OF A MAN CONCERNED ABOUT HIS DYING FRIEND AND CLIENT.

YOU'VE WORKED HARD ALL YOUR LIFE, HAROLD, AMASSING YOUR FORTUNE. I CAN'T SEE YOU TURNING IT OVER TO THAT HOARD OF DESPISING RELATIVES. THEY'RE JUST WANTING AROUND FOR YOU TO DIE SO THEY CAN GET THEIR HANDS ON IT.

THAT ISN'T TRUE, THEY'VE COME BECAUSE

THEY'VE COME BECAUSE THE MOMENT THEY'VE DREAMED OF IS CLOSE AT HAND. THEY'VE COME BECAUSE THEY SMELL THOSE HUNDY DOLLAR SIGNS THEY'VE WAITED FOR THE MOMENT FOR YEARS... PRAYED FOR IT.

I WON'T BELIEVE IT, THEY'RE CONCERNED ABOUT ME.



THEY'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MONEY? THAT'S ALL I'VE ASKED, HAROLD. I DON'T CARE. IT'S YOUR MONEY IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE IT TO THOSE THOSE VULGURES. SO IT. I'VE SAID MY PIECE.

SUPPOSE... NOW I'M NOT SAYING I BELIEVE YOU, BUT JUST SUPPOSE WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO WITH THE MONEY?

BETTER TO TURN IT OVER TO A WORTHWHILE CHARITY, HAROLD... TO PEOPLE WHO NEED THE MONEY, AND WILL APPRECIATE IT... THEN TO TURN IT OVER TO THOSE WORTHLESS SNAILS.

IF... IF I COULD ONLY BE SURE! IF I COULD ONLY KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME IS THE TRUTH!



IF... IF I COULD PROVE IT TO YOU, HAROLD. IF I COULD SHOW YOU, WOULD YOU CUT THEM OFF... GIVE A NEW WILL LEAVING THE MONEY TO CHARITY?

YES? YES? I WOULD! BUT HOW COULD YOU?

HAROLD, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR THEM, ALL OF THEM, LASHING OVER YOUR DEAD BODY... SPEWING FORTH THEIR TRUE FEELINGS... OVER YOUR CORPSE...

MY... MY CORPSE?

YES, HAROLD. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO LISTEN IN ON YOUR OWN FUNERAL? WOULD THAT CONVINCE YOU?

MY GOD, WALKER! WHAT AN IDEA! YOU MEAN STAGE A PROXY FUNERAL?





CORRECT. LET ME GO DOWN AND TELL THEM YOU'RE DEAD. THEN, DOCTOR CROTTY AND I WILL ARRANGE FOR A **HEAVY FUNERAL**. ONLY YOU'LL BE ALIVE IN THE CASKET, LISTENING TO EVERY WORD...

BUT, WHAT IF I SMILE... OR SNEEZE?

WE'LL ARRANGE A **CLOSED CASKET** CEREMONY.

THEN HOW WILL I HEAR?

WE'LL HAVE THE FUNERAL CHAPEL **WIRED**... HAVE A **SMALL SPEAKER** IN YOUR CASKET WITH YOU. YOU'LL HEAR **EVERY WORD** THAT'S SAID...

I AGREE! I AGREE! I AGREE...

AND I'LL DRAW UP A NEW WILL, SO THAT IF AND WHEN YOU ARE CONVINCED, YOU CAN LEAP FROM YOUR CASKET, SURPRISE THEM ALL, AND SIGN IT RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM!

GOOD? GOOD?

THEN EVERYTHING IS SET, ON LEP... WHAT **CHARITY** SHALL I MAKE THE WILL OUT FOR, HAROLD?

I'LL LEAVE THAT TO YOU, WILLARD. PICK OUT **ANY** WORTHWHILE CHARITY! BY GOD, I CAN'T WAIT...

HAROLD FARBER RUBBED HIS FINGERS TOGETHER AS HIS DOCTOR AND LAWYER LEFT...

I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR WHAT THEY SAY! IMAGINE...

IMAGINE HAVING THE **OPPORTUNITY** TO LISTEN IN ON YOUR OWN FUNERAL... TO HEAR WHAT PEOPLE **WHISPER** ABOUT YOU... TO KNOW THE **TRUTH**. THE TRUTH THEY'VE **HIDDEN** FROM YOU EVERY MINUTE YOU WERE ALIVE!

WHILE DOWN BELOW, THE LAWYER SYCOPED BEFORE THE CROWD OF HURRIED RELATIVES AND ANNOUNCED...

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... OUR BELOVED HAROLD FARBER PASSED AWAY A FEW MOMENTS AGO!**





THE NEXT MORNING, THE FUNERAL CHAPEL WAS JAMMED WITH PEOPLE...RELATIVES AND FRIENDS THAT HAD COME TO MOURN HAROLD PARKER'S PASSING. IN AN ANTEROOM, FROM BEHIND HEAVY DRAPES, HAROLD PARKER PEERED AT THEM...



THEY ALL LOOK SOMBER, WALKER. I THINK YOUR...

...THEY'RE BECAUSE THEY AREN'T ALONE WITH YOU. COME LET ME HELP YOU INTO YOUR COFFIN YOU'LL SEE...

MILLARD HELPED HIS AGED CLIENT INTO THE SATIN-LINED COFFIN. DOCTOR CROTTY STOOD BY, WAITING...

NOW HERE'S THE SPEAKER YOU JUST LIE THERE AND LISTEN... LISTEN TO THE WHOLE THING.

WHAT ABOUT AGE, IF THE LID IS CLOSED...



THERE'LL BE ENOUGH AIR TO LAST AN HOUR OR SO. THAT'S ALL THE TIME YOU'LL NEED, I'M CERTAIN.

ALL RIGHT, IF YOU SAY SO.



READY?

READY.

THE LAWYER CLOSED THE LID. MR. PARKER LAY BACK AMONG THE SATIN FOLDS. THE SPEAKER AT HIS EAR RASPED...



CAN YOU HEAR ME, HAROLD?

YES.



LAWYER WALKER WHISPERED:

ALL RIGHT, I'M GOING TO OPEN THE DRAPES AND LET THEM COME IN. NOW, LISTEN...



MR. PARKER HEARD THE DRAPES SLIDE OPEN... HEARD HIS TRUSTED LAWYER'S VOICE:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IN HIS DYING WISH, HAROLD PARKER REQUESTED A CLOSED-COFFIN CEREMONY... SO IF YOU WILL, ALL FILE PAST THE COFFIN, WE'LL BEGIN...

LYING IN THE CASKET, HAROLD PARKER HEARD THE SOUNDS OF FOOTSTEPS SHUFFLING BY THE COFFIN... HEARD FANT WHISPERS. HE STRAINED TO LISTEN.





IN HIS MIND'S EYE, HE COULD SEE THE FACES OF HIS 'MOURNING RELATIVES' FILING BY HIS GABINET AS HE HEARD...

HUMPHAT! IT'S ABOUT TIME THE OLD CROW KICKED OFF.

I'LL SAY! I'VE GOT ENOUGH BEANS TO COVER MY WHOLE INHERITANCE...

ONE AFTER THE OTHER THEY CAME, AND HE COULD ALMOST SEE THEM AS THEY SAID...

GRIFEST! I THOUGHT HE'D NEVER DIE. WHEN DO THEY READ THE WILL?

TOMORROW AT WALKER'S OFFICE. I'LL BE THERE WITH BELLS ON IT'S FLORIDA FOR ME!

INSTEAD OF THAT DEBBAH MUSIC, THEY OUGHT TO BE PLAYING 'WE'RE DEAD! YOU'RE DEAD! YOU'RE DEAD! YOU'RE DEAD!'

THAT'S A GOOD ONE, JOHN, AND SO TRUE! HEH! HEH!



HAROLD SHIFTED HIS TEETH, THE TEARS WELLING UP IN HIS EYES AS HE HEARD...

ALL MY LIFE I HAD TO PRETEND I LIKED THE OLD CROW! NOW I'LL GET WHAT I REALLY LIKED! A SHARE OF HIS FORTUNE!

MURDER! MURDER! MURDER! LOVE THAT WORD!

O-M-G-D-HONEY, LOOK SAD! HE'S DEAD!

HOW CAN I? I'M DELICIOUSLY HAPPY! BOY, CAN WE USE THAT DOUGH!



ONE AFTER THE OTHER, THEY CAME BY. HAROLD COULD SEE THEM... EACH ONE...

GOOD-BYE, FARNER! HELLO, EASY LIVING! MY PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED!

THANKS FOR THE TOUCH, YOU OLD SKIN-FLINT!

THANK GOODNESS I DON'T HAVE TO SMILE AT HIS DOLLY PUSS ANYMORE. MAKING LIFE I LIKE HIM...



FINALLY, HAROLD COULD STAND IT NO LONGER. HE LEAPED FROM HIS GABINET... SCREAMING...

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH, YOU LARPS. YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING FORE-FLUSHERS... YOU VULFURES... YOU LERCHES...

GOOD LORD! HE'S ALIVE!





THE MOURNING RELATIVES STARED IN HORROR AS OLD HAROLD FARMER STORMED UP AND DOWN...



I'M LEAVING MY WHOLE FORTUNE TO A WORTHWHILE CHARITY TO THE .THE



MR. FARMER SCANNED THE WILL WITH BLAZING EYES.



MR. FARMER SIGNED THE WILL WITH A FLOURISH.



MR. FARMER DROPPED DEAD.



IN ANOTHER ANTEROOM, DOCTOR JAMES CROFT WAS QUIETLY PAYING OFF THE GROUP OF ACTORS HE AND LAWYER WILLARD WALKER HAD HIRED TO SPEAK INTO THE MICROPHONE CONNECTED TO THE SPEAKER IN MR. FARMER'S COFFIN.



AND AFTER THE STUNNED RELATIVES HAD LEFT, THE DOCTOR AND THE LAWYER STOOD OVER MR. FARMER'S COFFIN WITH MR. FARMER'S 'REALLY-DEAD-THIS-TIME' CORPSE INSIDE, AND CONGRATULATED EACH OTHER...



PERFECT. WELL, THAT'S MY *BLAME-SERVING* MOODS. BY THE WAY I TOOK A FIRM OATH TO 'THE HAPPY HOME FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN' 'OTHER MIGHT LOVELY PLACED AND EMPTY LOT, FINE ESTATE, TOO' A TENT, DARLING GROUP OF ORPHANS? TWO... GIRLS... AGES 25 AND 30, RESPECTIVELY? THEY'RE HELPING THE DOG AND THE LAWYER SPEND THE DOUGH WELLS TO THEIR 'DESERVING CHARITY', ETC. NOW, REMEMBER - IF YOU'RE A FAN AND AN ADDICT OF E.G. HARRIS, JOIN THE E. G. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!

THE END



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MARCH

10¢

# THE VAULT OF HORROR

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



5  
THIRD  
PRINTING





GADZOOKS!  
MY JOY KNOWS  
NO BOUNDS! I  
HAVE JUST RECEIVED  
MY **E.C. FAN-ADDICT  
CLUB MEMBERSHIP  
KIT** WHICH INCLUDES  
A FULL COLOR  
7½X10½ ILLUMINATED  
CERTIFICATE, A STURDY  
WALLET **IDENTIFICATION  
CARD**, AN ATTRACTIVE  
EMBROIDERED  
**SHOULDER PATCH**,  
AND A STUNNING  
ANTIQUE BRONZE-  
FINISH BAS-  
RELIEF **PIN**. SO  
**WHEW!**

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NEW YORK 12, N.Y.

SO, ALL RIGHT! SO HERE'S MY TWO  
BITS. SO MAKE ME A MEMBER, ALREADY,  
AND SEND ME THE THINGS AND STUFF LIKE  
WHAT THE KID UP THERE GOT... SO!

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_

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# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

NO, NO, NO! AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS? HAVE YOU BEEN A GHOUL LITTLE CHILD? I HOPE SO, FOR WITH THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT ALL ABOUT US, THE EDITORS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FITTING TO GIVE OUR STORY FOR THIS ISSUE A LITTLE CHRISTMASY FEELING! IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE! AND ALL GODDLITTLE CHILDREN ARE TUCKED IN THEIR BEDDY-BYES FAST ASLEEP! NO! NO! A PERFECT ATMOSPHERE FOR A CHRISTMAS TALE, EN?

## ...AND ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE...





HER HUSBAND WAS DEAD, AND IT WAS THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT SHE'D EVER HAD! SHE STOOD OVER THE LIFELESS BODY SPRAWLED AT HER FEET AND SMILED.



HA, HA! MERRY CHRISTMAS, JOSEPH! YOU'RE SLEEPING SO PEACEFULLY! DREAMING OF SANTA CLAUS?

SHE LINGERED... THINKING OF THE MONTHS OF PLANNING THAT HAD CULMINATED IN ONE SWIFT BLOW WITH A POKER. FROM UPSTAIRS SHE HEARD A CHILD'S CRIES...



GAROL! SHE'S AWAKE!

SHE HURRIED UPSTAIRS, OPENED THE DOOR TO A SMALL BEDROOM



CAROL? WHAT'S THE MATTER, DEAR?

DID SANTA CLAUS COME YET, MOMMY? DID HE?

NO, DEAR, NOT YET! IT'S NOT TIME, SO YOU GO BACK TO SLEEP!



CAN I SEE HIM, MOMMY? CAN I SEE HIM WHEN HE COMES?

I'LL SEE, DEAR! NOW YOU BE A GOOD LITTLE GIRL AND GO RIGHT TO SLEEP, OR SANTA WON'T COME AT ALL! ALL RIGHT?



ALL RIGHT, MOMMY! 'NIGHT...

SHE REMAINED UNTIL HER DAUGHTER WAS SLEEPING AGAIN, THEN RETURNED DOWNSTAIRS. SHE STEPPED OVER HER HUSBAND'S BODY, MOVED TO THE TABLE. CASUALLY, SHE LIT A CIGARETTE AND INHALED...



YOU WERE SUCH A MOUSE, JOSEPH! YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO BE FREE OF YOU AT LAST!

THERE WAS NO HURRY. SHE HAD PLANNED TOO LONG AND TOO WELL. THERE WERE NO NEIGHBORS WITHIN MILES AND SHE HAD ALL NIGHT TO DISPOSE OF THE BODY. SHE THOUGHT OF THE INSURANCE, DRIFTED ACROSS THE ROOM, AND TURNED ON THE RADIO...





THE MUSIC FLOATED THROUGH THE ROOM *CHRISTMAS CAROLS!* SHE HUMMED SOFTLY, AND LOOKED AGAIN AT THE CORPSE. THE STAINED POKER LAY NEARBY...



SHE PICKED UP THE FORK, FONDLED IT, CLEANED IT, SET IT IN ITS PLACE BY THE FIRE...



SHE TURNED AND GAZED AT THE GAILY DECORATED CHRISTMAS TREE, AND THE PRESENTS BENEATH IT...

TSK,TSK...NOW I'LL NEVER KNOW WHETHER OR NOT JOSEPH WOULD HAVE LIKED THAT TIE I BOUGHT FOR HIM! OH, WELL...



ABRUPTLY,THE MANTEL CLOCK CHIMED THE HOUR. IT WAS TIME...



SHE CROSSED THE ROOM TO TURN OFF THE RADIO... THEN STOPPED, LISTENING...

... LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM TO BRING YOU A SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN...



...WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE WORLD-WIDE NEWS BUREAU THAT A **HOMICIDAL MANIAC** HAS ESCAPED FROM THE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE! HE HAS **BRUTALLY MURDERED FOUR WOMEN** AND ALL CITIZENS ARE WARNED TO REMAIN OFF THE STREETS! **THIS MAN IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!** WE REPEAT, **HE IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!**



...ANOTHER REPORT HAS JUST BEEN HANDED ME... HERE IS A DESCRIPTION OF THE ESCAPED MANIAC! HE IS SIX FEET, THREE INCHES TALL, TWO HUNDRED TEN POUNDS, HAS DARK EYES, SHAGGY BLACK HAIR! IT IS REPORTED THAT HE IS NOW WEARING A **SANTA CLAUS** COSTUME WHICH HE HAD TAKEN FROM A MAN IN THE VILLAGE OF **PLEASANTVILLE!**





...HE IS BELIEVED TO BE HEADED NORTH! POLICE OFFICIALS STATE THAT HE WILL **NOT HARM CHILDREN**, AND WILL ONLY INJURE MEN IF HE IS PROVOKED! IT IS SAID THAT HE IS OBSESSED WITH THE **KILLING OF WOMEN!** ALL FOUR WOMEN THAT HE ALREADY HAS MURDERED HAD BEEN ATTACKED AND VICIOUSLY DISFIGURED...



**ALL WOMEN ARE WARNED TO REMAIN INDOORS! THIS MAN IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!** FURTHER BULLETINS WILL BE BROUGHT TO YOU AS SOON AS THEY ARE RECEIVED, STAY TUNED NOW FOR...



I HADN'T FIGURED ON ANYTHING LIKE THIS! STILL... CAROL WILL BE OKAY IF I LEAVE HER! THE RADIO SAID THAT HE WON'T HARM CHILDREN! AND I HAVE TO GET RID OF JOSEPH!



SHE TIP-TOED TO THE WINDOW AND PEELED THROUGH! IN THE DARKNESS, SHE COULD DISCERN THE RED COSTUME, THE WHITE FUR TRIM...



IN A FIT OF SUDDEN PANIC SHE RUSHED TO THE TELEPHONE AND SNATCHED UP THE RECEIVER TO CALL THE POLICE! SHE STOPPED... AND AN ICY FEAR CLUTCHED HER HEART.





SLOWLY, SHE LOWERED THE RECEIVER. SHE STARED AT THE BODY... AT THE FRONT DOOR... AND THE HOUSE WAS AS QUIET AS DEATH...



MAYBE HE'LL GO AWAY! BUT I'D... I'D BETTER PUT JOSEPH'S BODY IN THE CLOSET! IF CAROL WOKE UP...

THE FRONT DOOR KNOB RATTLED LOUDLY. SHE MOVED AWAY FROM THE CORPSE TO THE DOOR...



HE'S TRYING TO GET IN!  
HE ISN'T GOING TO GO AWAY!  
HE WANTS ME!

IN THE SILENCE SHE HEARD HIM STOMP FROM THE PORCH! FROM WITHIN, SHE FOLLOWED THE SOUND OF HIS FOOTSTEPS CRUNCHING IN THE SNOW...



HE... HE'S GOING AROUND THE SIDE OF THE HOUSE!  
HE'S GOING TO THE BACK DOOR!

MADLY, SHE RACED THROUGH THE HOUSE TO THE BACK DOOR! SHE LOCKED AND BOLTED IT NERVOUSLY.



THERE!

SHE HEARD HIS STEPS CLUMPING ONTO THE BACK PORCH, AND SHE STOOD AWAY FROM THE DOOR, FEARFULLY WATCHING THE KNOB AS IT WAS TURNED AND RATTLED...



AGAIN, SHE LISTENED IN TERROR AS THE FOOTSTEPS LEFT THE PORCH AND MOVED THROUGH THE SNOW...



THE WINDOWS! HE'LL TRY THE WINDOWS!

FRANTICALLY, SHE RUSHED FROM WINDOW TO WINDOW, MAKING CERTAIN THEY WERE ALL LOCKED, ALL THE BLINDS LOWERED! THE RADIO ANNOUNCEMENT THUNDERED IN HER MIND. SHE SHUDDERED CONVULSIVELY...



I'VE GOT TO HURRY!  
I'VE GOT TO HURRY!  
ONE OF THEM MAY BE UNLOCKED!



WHILE LOCKING ALL THE WINDOWS SHE NOTICED JOSEPH ON THE FLOOR. A STRANGE EXPRESSION FLICKED ACROSS HER FACE. FOR A MOMENT SHE SEEMED BEWILDERED.

JOSEPH... HEAVENS! I'VE GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF SIGHT! IF CAROL EVER WOKE UP AND CAME DOWN-STAIRS!

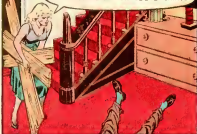


SHE HURRIED DOWN TO THE CELLAR, STUMBLING AND ALMOST FALLING IN THE DIM LIGHT! SHE SWISHED HER HAND ACROSS HER FOREHEAD, WIPE AWAY THE DROPS OF PERSPIRATION.



LOADED WITH HER BURDEN SHE CLUMSILY CLIMBED THE STAIRS AND ENTERED THE LIVING ROOM. SHE SAW THE BODY...

OH... I STILL HAVEN'T PUT HIM AWAY IN THE CLOSET! IF CAROL EVER SAW...



SHE STARTED DRAGGING THE BODY ACROSS THE FLOOR TO THE CLOSET, THEN STOPPED AND LOOKED AT THE FRONT DOOR AND THEN AT THE WINDOWS. SHE DROPPED THE BODY...

THE WINDOWS! I'VE LOCKED ALL THE WINDOWS... BUT HE COULD BREAK THEM! HE'LL COME INSIDE AND KILL ME!



THERE WAS LUMBER IN THE CELLAR. JOSEPH WAS ALWAYS BUYING AND PICKING UP PIECES OF LUMBER AND SILENTLY SHE THANKED HIM! SHE GATHERED AS MANY BOARDS AS SHE COULD, GRABBED A HAMMER AND A HANDFUL OF NAILS...



SHE PUT DOWN THE BOARDS, THE HAMMER, THE NAILS AND NOW, TREMBLING, SHE LIFTED JOSEPH AND BEGAN ONCE MORE TO DRAG HIM TO THE CLOSET...





SHE STOPPED, SUDDENLY REMEMBERING THE BREAKABLE WINDOWS AND THE FIEND SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE! SHE DROPPED THE BODY, PICKED UP THE LUMBER, THE NAILS, THE HAMMER AND STARTED BOARDING THE WINDOWS...



FROM THE REAR OF THE HOUSE SHE HEARD A POUNDING ON THE BACK DOOR AND SHE DROPPED THE HAMMER AND DROPPED THE NAILS AND SNATCHED UP THE PHONE TO CALL FOR HELP AND REMEMBERED THE BODY ON THE FLOOR...



SHE LET THE PHONE SLIP FROM HER GRASP AND TUMBLE INTO ITS CRADLE AND SHE PICKED UP THE HAMMER AND THE LUMBER AND ALL THE LITTLE NAILS AND FINISHED BOARDING UP THE WINDOWS...



SHE FINISHED THE WINDOWS AND WONDERED WHAT THE MANIAC WAS DOING AND REMEMBERED THE DEAD BODY AND WENT BACK AND DRAGGED IT INTO THE CLOSET...



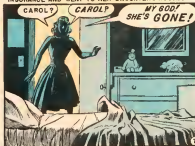
SHE WENT OVER ALL THE WINDOWS AGAIN, CHECKING TO SEE IF THEY WERE ALL BOARDED UP AND MADE SURE THE BODY WAS IN THE CLOSET AND WENT DOWN TO THE CELLAR TO CHECK THE CELLAR DOOR...



THE CELLAR DOOR WAS LOCKED AND SHE RAN UPSTAIRS AND CHECKED THE DOORS AND CHECKED THE WINDOWS AND MADE SURE THE BODY WAS IN THE CLOSET AND RACED UP TO THE ATTIC TO MAKE SURE IT WAS ALL CLOSED UP...



AND AFTER SHE CHECKED THE ATTIC SHE CHECKED THE LOCKS ON ALL THE WINDOWS ON THE SECOND FLOOR AND THOUGHT OF THE FIEND AND ALL THE INSURANCE AND WENT TO HER DAUGHTER'S ROOM...





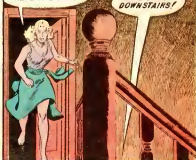
THE ROOM WAS EMPTY AND SHE TOOK THE BED-CLOTHES FROM THE EMPTY BED AND SLAMMED THE DOOR OF THE EMPTY CLOSET AND CHECKED THE LOCK ON THE EMPTY ROOM'S WINDOW...

IT'S LOCKED! SHE'S STILL HERE! SHE'S STILL IN THE HOUSE!



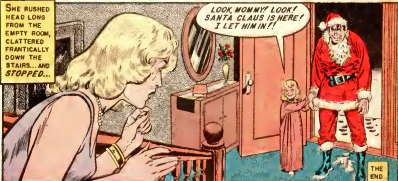
CAROL! CAROL! WHERE ARE YOU?

HERE I AM MOMMY! HERE I AM! DOWNSTAIRS!



SHE RUSHED HEAD LONG FROM THE EMPTY ROOM, CLATTERED FRANTICALLY DOWN THE STAIRS... AND STOPPED...

LOOK, MOMMY! LOOK! SANTA CLAUS IS HERE! I LET HIM IN!!



THE END

HO, HO, HO! AND WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS? DID YOU ENJOY OUR LITTLE STORY? CAROL'S MOMMY JUST GOT THE BIGGEST SURPRISE OF HER LIFE... YOU SEE, THIS SANTA LOVED TO SLEIGH BELLES! AND NEXT TIME YOU SEE

SANTA, BETTER MAKE SURE HE ISN'T SIX FOOT THREE WITH SHAGGY BLACK HAIR! THAT REMINDS ME... I GUESS IT'S TIME FOR ME TO REMOVE THIS MASK



HEH, HEH! YEP! IT'S ME... THE VAULT KEEPER! YOU DIDN'T THINK WE'D EVER HAVE THE REAL SANTA CLAUS IN THIS HORROR MAG, DID YOU? OH... I SUPPOSE YOU'VE BEEN WONDERING JUST WHAT I'VE GOT IN THIS SACK! HEH! IT'S ONLY WHAT'S LEFT OF CAROL'S MOMMY AFTER THAT MANIAC WAS THROUGH WITH HER! HEH, HEH, HEH, HEH! AND BY THE WAY,

MERRY CHRISTMAS!





# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! FOR A WHILE, I THOUGHT THE VAULT-KEEPER WAS GOING TO GET SICKENINGLY SWEET WITH THAT SANTA CLAUS ROUTINE! DON'T GET ME WRONG! SANTA'S ALL RIGHT. IN HIS PLACE! BUT THIS AIN'T THE PLACE! ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, KNOW WHAT I MEAN? ANYHOO—NAH, HERE'S A REAL CREEPY CONCOCTION THAT'LL KNOCK YOU OFF YOUR PINS, BUT GOOD! AND IT COMES TO YOU WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE CRYPT-KEEPER, WHICH IS ME! I CALL IT

## TOMBS-DAY!



THE CARAVAN PLOODED ON, SILHOUETTED AGAINST A SKY STILL BURNING WITH THE FIRE OF A SETTING SUN. PERCHED ATOP THEIR CAMELS, THREE AMERICANS LOOKED ANXIOUSLY AHEAD, ACROSS THE DARKENING SAND DUNES, TO THEIR DESTINATION. THE PYRAMID OF KHAFA? PROFESSOR BURTON STIRRED IN HIS SADDLE AND SIGNED TIREDLY

WELL, THERE IT IS! WE'RE ALMOST TO THE END OF OUR JOURNEY!

IT'S A GOOD THING, TOO! I'M GETTING A BIT SADDLE SORE! AND I CAN'T WAIT TO FIND OUT WHY OUR FIRST EXPEDITION *DISAPPEARED!*





PROFESSOR BURTON FELL SILENT AGAIN. IT HAD BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE HE HAD LAST BEEN IN THE NILE VALLEY, AND THOUGH THIS RETURN ELATED HIM, HE FELT VERY PERTURBED AT THE CAUSE OF HIS RETURN... THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF THE PREVIOUS EXPEDITION!

PROFESSOR... ISN'T THAT THE FAMOUS SPHINX I'VE READ SO MUCH ABOUT?

OH? OH... YES, MISS ALLEN! THAT'S THE SPHINX OF GIZEH!



MELODY ALLEN WAS A JOURNALIST... AND THE PROFESSOR KNEW THAT SHE WAS HOPING FOR MORE FACTS FOR HER STORY. HE TURNED TO FACE THE LOVELY WOMAN...

THIS SPHINX, MISS ALLEN, WAS CARVED FROM SOLID ROCK NEARLY FIVE THOUSAND YEARS AGO! IT'S HEAD IS A PORTRAIT OF KING KHAFFRA, WHOSE TOMB RESTS IN THAT PYRAMID JUST AHEAD OF US! THIS ENTIRE AREA IS REALLY A HUGE BURIAL GROUND, AND THIS SPHINX STANDS LIKE A SENTINEL, GUARDING THE TOMBS!



EGYPTIANS TELL FANTASTIC STORIES ABOUT THE SPHINX! IT'S SURFACE HAS BEEN WORN AWAY BY THE RAVAGES OF TIME, LEAVING A VERY STRANGE, INSCRUTABLE EXPRESSION, WHICH HAS CAUSED THE ARABS TO CALL IT... THE FATHER OF TERRORS!

HOW WEIRD!



THE CARAVAN CONTINUED PAST THE EVER-SILENT SPHINX AND CAME TO A HALT BEFORE THE HUGE PYRAMID...

WELL... HERE WE ARE! PERHAPS WE'LL SOON KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE FIRST EXPEDITION!

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHY THEY ALL SO SUDDENLY VANISHED, PROFESSOR?



THE EGYPTIANS TOOK GREAT PAINS TO PROTECT THEIR DEAD, MISS ALLEN! THEY BUILT THIS GREAT PYRAMID AS A TOMB FOR KING KHAFFRA, THEN HONEYCOMBED IT WITH SECRET PASSAGES AND FALSE BURIAL CHAMBERS TO MISLEAD ANYONE WHO ENTERED!



WE KNOW FROM MESSAGES THEY SENT US THAT THE FIRST GROUP WAS ON THE VERGE OF A MONUMENTAL DISCOVERY! I BELIEVE THEY HAD STUMBLED UPON A SECRET CHAMBER OR PASSAGEWAY THAT WOULD LEAD THEM TO THE REAL TOMB OF KING KHAFFRA, AND I THINK THEY MUST HAVE BECOME LOST IN THE LABYRINTHS!

BUT... BUT THAT WAS MONTHS AGO! HOW... HOW COULD THEY LIVE?



I HARDLY THINK WE'LL FIND THEM ALIVE, MISS ALLEN... IF WE FIND THEM AT ALL...

OH...





PROFESSOR BURTON TURNED AND WEARILY MOUNTED THE STONE-SLAB STEPS THAT LED TO THE PYRAMID ENTRANCE. THE OTHERS, IN SINGLE-FILE, FOLLOWED CLOSE BEHIND...

WE'LL MAKE A CURSORY EXAMINATION OF THE INTERIOR WHILE IT'S STILL LIGHT! IT'S JUST POSSIBLE THAT WE'LL FIND SOMETHING!

GODD IDEA! WE CAN SET UP CAMP LATER!



THEIR WAY ILLUMINATED BY LAMPS, THE SMALL GROUP MUDDLED THROUGH A MAZE OF PASSAGES AND CHAMBERS, DOWN LONG FLIGHTS OF NARROW STAIRS FILLED WITH THE STALE, MUSTY OOR OF AIR BEFOULED AGES PAST...

HAVEN'T WE GONE FAR ENOUGH? WE MIGHT GET LOST!

PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT! WE'LL REST HERE A MOMENT, THEN MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO SET UP CAMP!



ISGH! I WAS HOPING WE'D FIND *SOME* CLUE TO THEIR DISAPPEARANCE!

THIS PLACE IS LIKE AN OVEN! SO HARD TO BREATHE.



MAYBE TOMORROW WE'LL HAVE BETTER LUCK! WHEN WE'RE RESTED...

PROFESSOR! ONE OF THE ARABS JUST FOUND SOMETHING! COME QUICKLY!



HURRIEDLY, THEY SCRAMBLED THROUGH THE NARROW PASSAGEWAY.

GOOD HEAVENS! IT'S A SECRET PANEL! MAYBE THE FIRST GROUP FOUND THIS, TOO!

COME ON! WE MUST FIND OUT! LEAD THE WAY, ANBEY!



THE LITTLE ARAB CAUTIOUSLY ENTERED THE SECRET PASSAGE, FOLLOWED BY THE OTHERS UNTIL ALL WERE INSIDE. THE PROFESSOR SHONE HIS LAMP AROUND TO DISCERN THE NATURE OF HIS SURROUNDINGS.

WHY, THIS PASSAGE IS EVEN *NARROWER* THAN THE ONE WE JUST...

PROFESSOR! THE PANEL IS CLOSING! WE'VE GOT TO STOP IT!

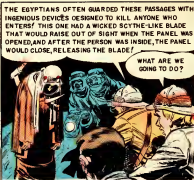


IN A GROUP THEY HURLED THEMSELVES AT THE MASSIVE STONE PANEL TO PREVENT ITS CLOSING... TO NO AVAL.

IT'S CLOSED! WE'RE LOCKED IN! MY GOD!









PRECEDED BY THE LIGHT OF HIS LAMP, THE PROFESSOR WARILY EDGED DOWN THE STEEPLY INCLINED STAIRS. HE FELT MELODY ALLEN'S FINGERS GRIPPING HIS SHOULDER TIGHTLY... TREMBLINGLY! DOWN... DEEPER AND DEEPER...

(GASP!) WONT THESE STAIRS EVER END?... SO TIRED... (GASP)

WAIT... PROFESSOR... WAIT FOR HASSAN... (GASP) HE... HAD TO... TO REST.



THE SHOCKING, BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM FROZE THEM TO THE SPOT! FOR A MOMENT ONLY THE SOUND OF THEIR HEAVY BREATHING COULD BE HEARD IN THE SILENCE, AS THEY STARED INTO ONE ANOTHER'S EYES. THEN, WITHOUT A WORD, THEY CLAMBERED CUMBLY BACK UP THE LONG STAIRS, KNOWING THAT IT WAS TOO LATE... KNOWING FULL WELL JUST WHAT THEY WOULD FIND...

(GASP!) A... A POOL... OF BLOOD!

WE'RE GOING TO DIE! (GASP!) WE'LL ALL BE KILLED! (SOB!)



WE'LL ALL DIE! (GASP!) ONE BY ONE, WE'LL ALL BE KILLED! (SOB! SOB!)

WELL, NOTHING'S GOING TO KILL ME! I'M NOT GOING ANY FURTHER! (GASP!) I'M GOING BACK! I'M GETTING OUT!

NO! NO! COME BACK! YOU'LL GET LOST! (GASP!) ...WE... MUST STAY TOGETHER! (GASP!) COME... BACK... COUGH!

LET HIM GO! DON'T... DON'T CHASE HIM! (GASP) HE'LL COME BACK... (GASP)

...HE... HE HAS NO LIGHT! HE WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE (GASP) YOU'RE... RIGHT... HE'LL BE BACK...

STAY HERE... WITH ME! (GASP!) I'M... I'M FRIGHTENED (SOB) JUST... JUST DON'T (SOB) LEAVE ME... (GASP!)



PROFESSOR BURTON SLUMPED BACK WEAKLY TO THE STONE FLOOR BESIDE THE SOBBING GIRL. HE CRADLED HIS HEAD ON HIS ARMS, STIFLED A CRY OF ANGUISH. THE LACK OF AIR CAUSED HIS HEAD TO POUND AND HIS CHEST TO ACHE. THEY WAITED IN THE SILENCE. THEY WAITED... LISTENING, HOPING, PRAYING... AND TIME WAS AN ETERNAL SECOND...



SUDDENLY, ECHOING THROUGH THE ANCIENT PASSAGES OF THE PYRAMID, AN AGONIZED SCREAM SPLIT THE SILENCE...





NEITHER MOVED. THEY BOTH KNEW IT WAS HOPELESS. THEIR STRENGTH HAD BECOME TOO PRECIOUS TO WASTE ON A DEAD MAN THEY WOULD NEVER FIND...

THERE'S **SOMEONE** IN HERE WITH US! I FEEL IT! THOSE DEATHS WEREN'T ACCIDENTS! **SOMEONE** REMOVED THE BODIES! WHO IS IT, PROFESSOR? WHO IS IT?!

I I DON'T KNOW (GASP!) I'VE BEEN THINKING THE SAME THING! SOMEONE, OR SOME **THING**... IS DELIBERATELY TRYING TO KILL US! BUT... IT'S SO FANTASTIC... I... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!



MELODY ALLEN STRUGGLED TO RAISE HERSELF...

YOU, YOU SAID. SOME **'THING'**! WHAT

THERE'S A LEGEND ABOUT THE **SPHINX**! THEY SAY THAT AGES AGO A WAY WAS FOUND TO CROSS-BREED A **LION** WITH A **HUMAN**, AND THE CREATURE THAT DEVELOPED LIVED FOR **THOUSANDS OF YEARS**! THEY SAY THE **SPHINX** ACTUALLY LIVED!



THEY STUMBLED DOWN THE LONG FLIGHT OF STEPS, ALONG A CORRIDOR...

... BUT IT WAS A **VIGIDUS** CREATURE, AND SO TERRIBLY **POWERFUL** AS TO DEFEY DESCRIPTION! AND BECAUSE THERE WAS NO OTHER **USE** FOR IT, THEY SUPPOSEDLY **LOCKED** IT IN THIS PYRAMID TO GUARD KING **KHAFRA'S** TOMB!



NONSENSE! (GASP!) ...PROBABLY SOME MEMBER OF THE FIRST EXPEDITION... HIDING HERE... KILLING US! (GASP) HIDING ALL THE BODIES...

...HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT! MAYBE THEY FOUND... **GREAT WEALTH!** MAYBE SOMEONE BECAME **GREEDY**! YES! (GASP) THAT'S PROBABLY...



THE PROFESSOR'S VOICE TRAILED OFF INTO THE DARKNESS. BEFORE THEM STOOD AN OPEN DOOR...

...PROFESSOR... BE CAREFUL! DON'T... DON'T GO IN THERE!

**BUT THIS IS IT!** MISS ALLEN, BEHIND THIS DOOR LIES THE **ANSWER!** I'M SURE OF IT! WE'VE FOUND KING **KHAFRA'S** **REAL** TOMB!



TOGETHER, THEY STEPPED THROUGH THE DOORWAY...

AH! I KNEW IT! THE MUMMY THAT WAS REMOVED FROM THIS PYRAMID BY OUR MUSEUM YEARS AGO WAS **NOT** THE **REAL** KING **KHAFRA**! THIS IS THE OUTER CHAMBER TO HIS **TOMB**! THERE MUST BE A **SECRET** PANEL...

PROFESSOR! THERE IT IS! OVER THERE! IT'S OPEN!



ON HANDS AND KNEES THEY CRAWLED SLOWLY, NERVOUSLY, UNDER THE HINGED STONE SLAB. THEY HOOKED TOGETHER BY THE ENTRANCE, THEIR BODIES QUIVERING WITH FEAR AND EXPECTANCY, THEIR HEARTS POUNDING.

PROFESSOR (GASP!) WHAT IS IT? WHERE ARE WE? WHAT'S **IN** HERE? (GASP)

I WAS RIGHT! THIS IS THE **AUTHENTIC** TOMB OF KING **KHAFRA**! **LOOK!**







THEY TURNED AND STARED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOUND! IN THE YELLOW LIGHT OF THE LAMP, THEY SAW A MONSTROUS CREATURE ENTER THROUGH THE OPENING IN THE WALL... A CREATURE WITH A BODY OF A HUGE LION AND THE WITHERED, AGES OLD HEAD OF A MAN! THE GIRL SLUMPED TO THE FLOOR... AND PROFESSOR BURTON HAD TIME TO EMIT ONE SHORT, PETRIFIED SCREAM BEFORE THE SPHINX LEAPED!





## SPACE TO BREATHE!

Lionel Blivet stamped down on the brake, switched off the ignition key and swung out of the car. The air was dry and clear up here on the narrow dirt road; high above towered the bald cliffs of the Waraji mountain range. Lionel reached into the sedan through the open window, and turned a dashboard dial. There was a momentary whirr, then the sound of blaring trumpets issued from the car radio. Lionel smiled, his sense of isolation relieved by the apparent nearness of the studio orchestra... it was a family joke that Lionel would probably try to sneak a portable radio into his coffin, to accompany him on his long trek to the cemetery!

The sky above was glittering blue, dotted occasionally by creamy suds of cloud. This was the sort of freedom that Lionel hankered for... the open space here in the lofty hills gave a man a chance to *breathe*! He might even amble over to that crude path which snaked up toward the crest of the nearest outcropping of rock, Lionel mused. He turned, his hand moving toward the off/on switch of the car radio. He'd be gone for a short while, exploring the hills... no sense in running down the battery, was there?

At that moment a strange noise crescendoed down from far above... from some hidden niche in the hill... and Lionel whirled, his curiosity aroused. A series of blurred shadows moved across the mountain's face; high up under the crest there appeared to be a cave which had escaped previous detection. Lionel drew a deep breath, his blood tingling, and raced toward the path. Worth looking into... might be something exciting up there in that cave!

The sound of the car radio gradually diminished as Lionel slithered and groped up the steep incline. By the time he had reached the mouth of the cave Lionel had to turn and peer far down to reassure himself that his car was where he had left it. Then he plunged into the murky darkness of the cave.

Almost at once he was aware of a furious flapping against his body, stunning him with its brutal force. He shook his head and tried to back out of the cave but, to his surprise, discovered he was stretched on the rough ground... he had obviously been knocked off his feet the moment he stepped out of the sunlight! Lionel squinted, trying to accustom his eyes to the perilous darkness; suddenly the things were on him again... slashing savagely at his face, ripping at the arms he threw up to protect himself. Now he was on his back, squirming in agony, blanketed by a swarm of hissing creatures which tore mercilessly at his flesh.

He was badly wounded, Lionel knew instinctively, tasting blood with his tongue. And then, hearing the redoubled sound of flailing wings, he realized who his assailants were. He had walked innocently into a cave housing a horde of bloodthirsty, man-killing **BATS!**

On his face, his nose buried in the gritty sand, Lionel felt the vicious, incessant, deadly jabbing at the back of his skull. And in that last moment of consciousness, Lionel Blivet's brain held a single thought. *I'm doomed to die up here in this god-forsaken cave, an inner voice whispered, and I didn't turn off the car radio! That battery... it's going to... to... AIEEEEEEE!*





YEP, KIDDIES! **E.C.'S NEW HUMOR MAG, PANIC IS ON SALE.** SO RUSH DOWN TO YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND AND GET YOUR COPY. HOWEVER IF YOU **DON'T** WANT TO **MISS** ANY FOOTBALL GAMES... IF YOU WANT TO **READ PANIC** AND **SIT IN THE BOWL** AT THE **SAME TIME... SUBSCRIBE!** FILL OUT THE COUPON AND MAIL TO...

THE PANICKY EDITOR'S OF:  
**PANIC**  
ROOM 106  
225 LAFAYETTE ST.  
N.Y.C., 12, N.Y.

PLEASE SEND ME THE NEXT 8  
ISSUES OF **PANIC** FOR WHICH I ENCLOSE  
ONE DOLLAR (\$1.00)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

ZONE \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_



# THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Hah, heh! BIG NEWS THIS ISSUE! Big, tall, thin news! I get rid of one editor... wore him down, I did!... and up pops another idiot to take his place! Yep... it's a PANIC!—(The name of E.C.'s newest mag!—ed.) Just because Feldstein gets busy putting out a new mag, (PANIC!—ed.) I figure I'll do E.C. a big favor... and offer myself free as editor. They don't take ME... but take that crumb CRAIG what's been drawing my stories for the last four years! Imagine... putting a mere artist over ME! So after four years, at least I get a change of one of the two insipid faces that have been leering at me. Course, Obnoxious Willy's still around. Next, I go to work on him! Well—enough of this tomfoolery... let's plunge into the mail sack...

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I think the OLD WITCH, the CRYPT-KEEPER, and you are the world's three most beautiful women.

Rosemary Cage  
Washington, D. C.

Awsight now! Enough is enough... and too much is sufficient! The time has finally come to clear up what is rapidly becoming a downright embarrassing situation, to put it mildly. And I have no desire to put it mildly. (So why put it?—ed.) On the job ten minutes, and already poking your tall, thin nose in, eh, Craig? (Please... no trouble, I've been sick!—ed.) Anyway... as I was saying before I was so crudely interrupted... me and C.K. are MEN! (Are what?—ed.) MALES! Ducha read Kinsey, ya low-lifes? So let not anyone make sad error a-gain!

Dear V.K.,

The vocabulary in your delightfully disgusting tales of horror should deeply impress those at your readers with a high intellectual capacity, as well as raise the level of word recognition of your younger readers. Keep up the fine work.

Richard Gunn  
Richmond, Va

Softly, youse slob. Stuck wit me, and youse'll get a great big vocabu... vocabs... youse'll know a lotta big words too

Dear Vault-Keeper,

... As time goes on, I'm realizing more and more the great difference between yours and the other publishing companies. Anyone can easily tell by reading just one good old E.C. that your company puts much more effort and thinking into every story than the other trashy companies would ever dream of doing.

Allan Katz  
Flushing, Long Island

Softly, youse slob. Stuck wit us, and youse'll get phantasmagorical paroxysms replete with silvery clangors of exaltation. (Who...?—ed.)

And now for a few choice tid-bits from my talented readers! First, an E.C. PARANOID PARODY to be sung to the tune of Take Me Out to the Ball Game... submitted by Michael Reynolds of Somerset, Pa.:

Stake me out in the hall park  
Stake me out in a shroud  
Slash me and stretch me upon the rack  
After I'm dead I will surely come back.  
Let me chew, chew, chew on the home team  
If they don't scream it's a shame  
For it's one, two, three backs you're dead  
In the old hall game!

Now a touch of E.C. PERVERTED POETRY submitted by Larry Tucker and Arnold Hageman of Anaconda, Montana:

Greasy, grizzly, gopher guts  
Are just the thing to eat;  
Give you great big bulging eyes  
And a couple extra feet!  
or  
Mary had a little ram  
Who gored her just for show;  
Now all that's left of Mary  
Is a finger and a toe!

And from Kreda Freeman of Star, Idaho:

I was walkin' down the road  
When I stepped upon a toad  
Its guts fell out and I fell in  
That was the end of me and him.

And from Paul H. Cox of Farmville, N. C.:

On top of Old Smokey  
All covered with red  
I lost my true loved one  
I bashed in her head!

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I like your magazines very much, but I want you to know that my father is an undertaker, and a very nice undertaker too. I don't like the way you always show undertakers to be hideous monsters and depraved maniacs. Please don't run any more stories about undertakers, like that.

Jerry Simonetti  
San Francisco, Calif.

I'm all choked up! All right, Jerry... no more nasty stories about undertakers. I promise!

And now for a few commercials before closing! New subscription rate... 8 issues of the VAULT OF HORROR... one buck... manila envelope. And remember... JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB... details on the inside front cover! And then there's PANIC don't miss the first issue of this hot item! Guaranteed a sell-out... even if my idiot editors have to buy up all the copies themselves! And do write, you dears... more poetry, songs, titles, things, and dead animals! The address for stuff like that there is:

The Vault-Keeper  
Room 706, Dept. 35  
225 Lafayette Street  
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

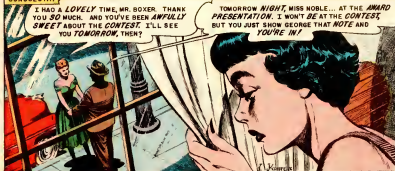


HERE'S A PRETTY HORRIBLE YARN  
ABOUT A GAL WHO GOT HER...

# BEAUTY REST



HELEN CURTIS DREW ASIDE THE FLIMSY CURTAIN THAT DRAPED THE SOLE WINDOW OF THE CHEAP FURNISHED ROOM SHE SHARED WITH JOYCE NOBLE AND GAZED OUT INTO THE DESERTED MIDNIGHT STREET. HELEN FUMED, LUCKY JOYCE. JOYCE WAS ALWAYS GOING OUT ON DATES, BEING SHOWN THE TOWN, BEING TAKEN TO NIGHTCLUBS AND FANCY PARTIES... WHILE SHE, HELEN, WAS FORCED TO SPEND LONELY EVENINGS IN THEIR COLD-WATER FLAT. NOW SHE WATCHED AS THE FLASHY CAR DREW UP TO THE CURB AND JOYCE GOT OUT FOLLOWED BY HER LATEST CONQUEST...



I HAD A **LOVELY** TIME, MR. BOXER. THANK YOU **SO** MUCH. AND YOU'VE BEEN **AWFULLY SWEET** ABOUT THE **CONTEST**. I'LL SEE YOU **TOMORROW**, THEN?

**TOMORROW NIGHT**, MISS NOBLE... AT THE **AWARD PRESENTATION**. I WON'T **BE** AT THE **CONTEST**, BUT YOU JUST SHOW **GEORGE** THAT **NOTE** AND YOU'RE **IN**!

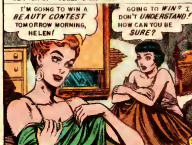
HELEN WATCHED AS JOYCE CLEVERLY AVOIDED MR. BOXER'S FUMBLING ATTEMPTS TO KISS HER GOOD-NIGHT. AFTER A WHILE, HE GAVE UP AND DROVE OFF, AND JOYCE CAME INSIDE...



HAVE A **NICE TIME**, HONEY?

OH! **HELEN!** YOU'RE **UP**! I HOPE I DIDN'T **AWAKEN** YOU. I HAVE SUCH **WONDERFUL NEWS**, DARLING!

HELEN STUDIED JOYCE AS SHE UNDRESSED. PRETTY JOYCE SHE'D ALWAYS MANAGED TO GET THE BREAKS, EVER SINCE THEY'D BOTH COME TO NEW YORK CITY IN SEARCH OF MODELING CAREERS.



I'M GOING TO WIN A **BEAUTY CONTEST** TOMORROW MORNING, **HELEN!**

GOING TO **WIN**? I DON'T **UNDERSTAND!** HOW CAN YOU BE **SURE**?



JOYCE REACHED FOR HER BAG AND HANDED HER JEALOUS ROOMMATE THE SLIP OF PAPER MR. BOXER HAD GIVEN HER...

JUST READ THAT!

'GEORGE, BE SURE THE BEARER OF THIS NOTE WINS THE CONTEST TODAY! BOXER'

JOYCE GIGGLED...

SEE? IT'S ALL FIXED! IT'S A PUT-UP JOB. I WIN, COME WHAT MAY!

THAT'S WONDERFUL FOR YOU, HONEY! WHAT KIND OF CONTEST IS IT?

I'M GOING TO BE 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954'!

MISS...WHAT? CORPSE? WHAT IN...?

THE UNDERTAKERS' AND EMBALMERS' ASSOCIATION IS HAVING A CONVENTION IN NEW YORK THIS WEEK. THE BEAUTY CONTEST IS A PUBLICITY GAG, BUT IT MEANS NEWSPAPER SPREADS...MIGHT EVEN MEAN HOLLYWOOD.

GEE, JOYCE! THAT'S SWELL!

HELEN SMILED EVEN THOUGH HER STOMACH WAS CURDLING. JOYCE WAS ALWAYS FORTUNATE THAT WAY. SHE'D ALWAYS MANAGED TO LAND A FEW MODELING JOBS WHILE HELEND'D DRAWN BLANK AFTER BLANK, AND NOW THIS...

I'M SO EXCITED, HELEN. I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO SLEEP.

LET ME FIX YOU A WARM DRINK OF MILK BABY

HELEN GOT OUT OF BED AND SLIPPED BEHIND THE SCREEN THAT CONCEALED THE ROOM'S TINY KITCHEN UNIT. SHE THOUGHT ABOUT THE NOTE...

'BE SURE THE BEARER OF THIS NOTE WINS!'

YOU'RE SWEET TO DO THIS, HELEN...

'THE BEARER WINS!' 'THE BEARER WINS!' IT KEPT POUNDING IN HELEN'S ANGRY JEALOUS BRAIN. SHE REACHED FOR THE BOTTLE OF SLEEPING PILLS. IF JOYCE OVERSLEPT TOMORROW...

...WHY...WHY I COULD GO IN HER PLACE, AND...AND I'D GET THE BREAK I NEED.

OH, NO TROUBLE AT ALL, JOYCE!

SLEEP TABS



HELEN UNSCREWED THE CAP AND EMPTIED THE REMAINING SLEEPING PILLS INTO THE POT OF WARMING MILK...



...POURED THE MILK INTO A GLASS AND BROUGHT IT TO HER ATTRACTIVE ROOMMATE...

THERE WE ARE, HONEY!

THANKS, HELEN! DID I TELL YOU ABOUT MR. BOXER?



JOYCE SIPPED THE MILK...

MR. BOXER IS THE PUBLICITY MAN FOR THE UNDER-TAKERS' AND EMBALMERS—SAY! WHAT'S IN THIS MILK?

I DISSOLVED A SLEEPING PILL IN IT, HONEY! IT'LL HELP YOU DROP OFF...



JOYCE SMILED, DRAINING THE GLASS...

OH! THANKS! ANYWAY, ALL I HAD TO DO WAS SWEET-TALK THE SLOB AND HE FELL FOR ME. HE CAN'T BE AT THE CONTEST TOMORROW, BUT... HE'LL BE... AT THE...HO, HUM... AWARD PRESENTATION... YAWN...

TIRED, HON?



A LITTLE! ANYWAY...ONCE I'M IN, I...YAWN...GIVE HIM THE...YAWN...BRUSH-OFF... AND...I...Z-Z-Z-Z...

AND ONCE I'M IN, BABY, I GIVE YOU THE BRUSH-OFF! SWEET DREAMS!



HELEN SLID INTO BED BESIDE PROSTRATE JOYCE, LISTENED TO HER HEAVY BREATHING, AND THOUGHT...

IT'LL BE EASY. MR. BOXER WON'T BE AT THE CONTEST IN THE MORNING SO I'LL BE SAFE. ONCE I WIN, IT'LL BE TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!



IN THE MORNING HELEN AROSE QUIETLY AND DRESSED HASTILY. SHE FISHED THE NOTE FROM JOYCE'S BAG AND SLIPPED OUT THE DOOR PAUSING ONLY TO SNEER AT THE SILENT FIGURE IN THE BED...

'BYE, HONEY! WHEN I COME BACK, I'LL BE 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954'!





HELEN CAUGHT A BUS UPTOWN AND WENT TO THE HOTEL WHERE THE UNDERTAKERS' AND EMBALMERS' ASSOCIATION WAS HOLDING ITS CONVENTION, AS SHE CROSSED THE LOBBY...

HEH, HEH. SO I SAYS TO THE DAME, 'SORRY, LADY! YOUR HUSBAND WAS OVER SIX FEET FOUR INCHES TALL. THAT'LL MEAN A CUSTOM-BUILT COFFIN!'

HA! AND I BET YOU SOAKED HER PLENTY!

I BEG YOUR PARDON!



PUSHED UP THE PRICE ON A STANDARD JOB TWO HUNDRED BUGGS. SHE NEVER KNEW THE DIFFERENCE! THINK A BAWLIN' WIDOW'S GONNA UP AND MEASURE A COFFIN DURING THE SERVICES? HEH, HEH! BOY, DID I HAVE TO SQUEEZE TO PUSH JASPER IN!

THAT REMINDS ME OF THE TIME I FOUND THIS GOLD BRIDGE IN ONE CUSTOMER'S MOUTH! I...

ER... COULD YOU HELP ME?



HUH? OH, SURE, LADY? WHAT'S GRIEVIN' YUH? HAH?

HEY, NED! THE DAME IS TRYIN' T' DIG UP GEORGE! HAW!

MR. BOXER GAVE ME THIS NOTE TO GIVE TO GEORGE, SO IF YOU'LL...

OH! SURE! SURE! HEY, GEORGE!

YES, MA'AM?

IS YOUR NAME GEORGE? MR. BOXER ASKED ME TO GIVE YOU THIS NOTE...



THE TALL, DARK MAN NAMED GEORGE READ THE NOTE. THEN LOOKED HELEN OVER.

OKAY, HONEY! DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING! JUST GET INTO YOUR SUIT. THE REST OF THE GIRLS ARE IN THERE.

THANK YOU, GEORGE!



HELEN UNDRESSED AND GOT INTO HER SUIT. SHE WAITED WITH THE REST OF THE CONTESTANTS UNTIL IT WAS TIME FOR THE CONTEST. THEN, ALONG WITH THE OTHERS, SHE PARADED BEFORE THE WEEBARKING UNDERTAKERS AND EMBALMERS.

OKAY, BOYS! CALM DOWN! HERE'S THE RESULTS! THE JUDGES PICK... TO BE 'MISS GORPSE OF 1954'... MISS HELEN GURTIS...





HELEN SMILED, WAITING FOR FLASH-BULBS TO START GOING OFF, BUT NOTHING HAPPENED...

WHY, WHAT'S WRONG, MISS CURTIS?

MR. BOXER SAID THERE'D BE NEWS-PAPER COVERAGE...



TONIGHT, MISS CURTIS! TONIGHT, AT THE AWARD PRESENTATION! COME TO THIS ADDRESS AT 8:00 P.M!

THANK YOU, GEORGE! I'LL BE THERE!



HELEN DRESSED AND HURRIED BACK DOWNTOWN TO HER FLAT. AS SHE BURST IN THE DOOR, TAUNTING...

WELL, HONEY! HERE I AM! 'MISS GORPSE OF 19...' CHOKO...



JOYCE NOBLE LAY CHALK-WHITE AND SILENT ON THE BED EXACTLY WHERE HELEN HAD LEFT HER THAT MORNING...

SHE...SHE'S DEAD!



HELEN BEGAN TO TREMBLE...

I...I MUST HAVE GIVEN HER TOO MANY PILLS. I...I KILLED HER!



HELEN BEGAN TO CRY. SHE THOUGHT OF GIVING HERSELF UP. SHE THOUGHT OF SPENDING THE REST OF HER LIFE BEHIND BARS. AND THEN SHE THOUGHT OF THE AWARD PRESENTATION THAT NIGHT...AND THE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND NEWS STORIES AND HOLLYWOOD! AND SHE MADE UP HER MIND...

HELLO! POLICE? I...I WANT TO REPORT A SUICIDE!



BY THE TIME THE POLICE HAD COME, HELEN HAD CLEANED HER FINGERPRINTS OFF THE POT, THE GLASS, AND THE BOTTLE THAT HAD CONTAINED THE SLEEPING PILLS. SHE SOBBED OUT HER STORY...

I WAS ASLEEP WHEN SHE GOT IN LAST NIGHT. THIS MORNING, I LEFT HER THAT WAY. I... SOB... DIDN'T EVEN KNOW... SOB... SHE'D DONE IT!





THAT NIGHT, HELEN RODE THE SUBWAY UPTOWN TO THE ADDRESS GEORGE HAD GIVEN HER, GLOATING WITH SATISFACTION. THE POLICE HAD BELIEVED HER STORY...

AND NOW, IT'S FAME AND FORTUNE FOR ME... THE CLIMB UP THE LADDER TO SUCCESS. I'M RID OF JOYCE, AND NO ONE SUSPECTS ANYTHING.



THE ADDRESS LED HELEN TO A DARK BROWNSTONE ON THE EAST SIDE OF TOWN. SHE RANG THE BELL HESITANTLY...

I DON'T SEE ANY CARS. I WONDER...

AN! 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954!' COME IN!



GEORGE LED HELEN DOWN DARK WINDING STEPS TO A DARK-SMELLING CELLAR...

MEMBERS OF THE UNDERTAKERS' AND EMBALMERS' ASSOCIATION. I GIVE YOU HELEN CURTIS... 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954'!



MR. BOXER WAS THERE... WITH THE OTHERS... LEERING AT HER...

WHAT HAPPENED TO MISS AGGLE, MISS CURTIS? SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO WIN!

I TOOK HER PLACE. SHE COULDN'T MAKE IT!



MR. BOXER SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY...

A PITY, MISS CURTIS. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED. YOU SEE...



THEY CAME AT HER WITH A RUSTLING OF RUBBER TUBES AND A WINNOWING OF SCALPELS AND A SLOSHING OF EMBALMING FLUID AND A HUMMING OF PUMPS AND MOTORS

YOU SEE, MISS CURTIS, 'MISS CORPSE OF 1954' MUST ACTUALLY BE A CORPSE

HEE HEE!

GET 'ER, CHOW! ROYST!



HEH, HEH! AND SO WE LEAVE HELEN TO THE MERCY OF THE UEA AS THEY CUT AND SLASH AND DRAIN HER BLOOD. NOW IT'S TIME TO TURN YOU OVER TO THE OLD WITCH, WHO'LL FEED YOU A DELIRIOUS

DESSERT TO WIND UP MY MOR-BID MAD. DON'T FORGET! IF YOU'RE AN E.C. FAN AND AN ADDICT OF E.C. MASS, JOIN 'THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!' MAKE FRIENDS! WEAR PINS! FRAME CERTIFICATES! CARRY CLUB CARDS! WEAR CLUB PATCHES! DROP DEAD! 'BYE!





# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! WELL IT'S TIME FOR ME TO BREW MY GOO, AND LET ME TELL YOU RIGHT NOW THAT IT'S A REAL GOOEY BREW I'M BREWING! THIS IS THE OLD WITCH, MISTRESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR, READY TO SERVE YOU ANOTHER MORBID MORSEL OF MISERY TO SATISFY YOUR MONSTROUS APPETITES FOR EVIL! HERE IT IS, YOU HORROR-HUNGRY HOUNDS, THE STORY OF A LITTLE BOY AND HIS...

## SHOE-BUTTON EYES!



GEE, WHILIKERS! THIS IS THE BEST CHRISTMAS I'VE EVER HAD! I CAN SEE! I CAN SEE EVERYTHING! I'M SO HAPPY!





"YOU SEE, I WAS BORN *BLIND*! AND THIS IS THE *FIRST* TIME IN MY WHOLE LIFE THAT I'VE BEEN ABLE TO SEE! GOSH, EVERYTHING IS SO PRETTY! AND MY MOMMY IS THE *PRETTIEST* OF ALL!"



"BUT I ALWAYS *KNEW* SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL EVEN THOUGH I NEVER SAW HER FACE UNTIL TODAY, 'CAUSE SHE WAS ALWAYS SO GOOD TO ME! WHEN I WAS ONLY A BABY SHE USED TO SING TO ME AND PLAY WITH ME TO MAKE ME FORGET HOW HUNGRY I WAS..."



"MY DADDY WAS A GOOD MAN. HE USED TO WORK HARD AN' EVEN THOUGH HE NEVER MADE MUCH MONEY, HE AND MOMMY WERE HAPPY!"



"LIKE I SAY, HE NEVER MADE MUCH MONEY, AND WHEN THERE WASN'T ANY WOOD FOR THE STOVE, THAT'S WHEN MOMMY USED TO CRADLE ME IN HER ARMS TO KEEP ME WARM..."



"I DON'T REMEMBER MY DADDY TOO WELL 'CAUSE HE DIED WHEN I WAS VERY SMALL. BUT I CAN REMEMBER THE SOUND OF MY MOMMY CRYING AT NIGHT AND HOW SHE USED TO TALK TO ME... LIKE I COULD UNDERSTAND..."



"IT WAS RIGHT AFTER MY DADDY DIED THAT MOMMY HAD TO START WORKING. I DIDN'T SEE HER MUCH, BUT WHEN SHE CAME HOME AT NIGHT, SHE'D SIT ME ON HER LAP AND TEACH ME THINGS, AND TALK TO ME AND KISS ME. GEE! SHE USED TO MAKE ME FEEL SO GOOD..."



"MY MOMMY TRIED TO TEACH ME EVERYTHING SHE COULD 'CAUSE I COULDN'T GO TO SCHOOL LIKE OTHER KIDS WHO COULD SEE! 'COURSE, SHE COULDN'T AFFORD TO SEND ME TO A *SPECIAL* SCHOOL... SO I DIDN'T HAVE MY FRIENDS AT ALL TO PLAY WITH! BUT I DIDN'T MIND... 'CAUSE I ALWAYS HAD MY *TEDDY BEAR*..."





"I DON'T REMEMBER WHERE MY TEDDY BEAR CAME FROM. SEEMS LIKE I ALWAYS HAD HIM! AND WHEN MY MOMMY WAS AWAY ALL DAY, HE USED TO KEEP ME COMPANY. I USED TO TALK TO HIM ALL THE TIME. TEDDY BEAR WAS THE **ONLY FRIEND I EVER HAD...**"



"MY MOMMY AND TEDDY BEAR NEVER LAUGHED AT ME 'CAUSE I COULDN'T SEE WHERE I WAS GOING. WHY DID MY NEW DADDY LAUGH AT ME?"



"SEEMS LIKE MY MOMMY WAS **ALWAYS** UNHAPPY. SOMETIMES MY NEW DADDY WOULDN'T COME HOME ALL NIGHT, AND TEDDY BEAR AND I WOULD LIE AWAKE, LISTENING TO MY MOMMY CRYING IN HER SLEEP. AND WHEN HE **DID** COME HOME... HE WAS ALMOST ALWAYS **DRUNK**..."



"GET AWAY FROM ME! I CAN WALK! GET ME SOME FOOD!"

"ALL RIGHT, JED! DON'T BE ANGRY! I'LL HAVE SOMETHING READY IN A MINUTE!"

"AND THEN MY MUMMY GOT MARRIED AGAIN. I DIDN'T LIKE MY NEW DADDY AS MUCH AS MY **REAL** DADDY AND I DON'T THINK MY MOMMY LIKED HIM, EITHER. SHE NEVER SAID SO RIGHT OUT, BUT I THINK SHE ONLY MARRIED HIM FOR MY SAKE..."



"LO... BILLY... THIS YOUR NEW DADDY? HE'S GOING TO TAKE CARE OF US..."

"LO, DADDY..."

"HA, HA! WHERE YOU GOIN, BOY? I'M OVER HERE!"

"AFTER MY NEW DADDY CAME TO LIVE WITH US, I HAD TO SLEEP ALONE. BUT I HAD TEDDY BEAR TO TALK TO. HE WAS ALWAYS MY FRIEND..."



"MY MOMMY AND I WERE AFRAID OF MY NEW DADDY. HE WAS MEAN TO US... AND HE USED TO MAKE MY MOMMY CRY..."



"MONEY, MONEY, MONEY! THAT'S ALL YOU EVER THINK OF!"

"(SOM) OH, JED, PLEASE! WINTER'S COMING! BILLY NEEDS NEW SHOES! (SOB)"

"HE DIDN'T LIKE ME. HE USED TO ALWAYS MAKE FUN OF ME AND LAUGH AT ME 'CAUSE I WAS **BLIND**!"

"HA, HA! THAT'S THE SECOND TIME YOU TRIPPED OVER THAT CHAIR! WHY DON'T YOU LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING, BOY? HA, HA!"



"OH, BILLY! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?"



"LOTS OF TIMES MY NEW DADDY WOULDN'T GIVE MY MOMMY ANY MONEY, AND THAT'S WHEN MY MOMMY HAD TO START WORKING AGAIN. BUT SHE HAD TO WORK TOO HARD... AND I KNEW IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR HER. SHE GOT SICK..."

MOMMY... YOU DON'T SOUND GOOD! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? ARE YOU?

(COUGH) OF COURSE I'M ALL RIGHT, BILLY! I'M FEELING JUST FINE... (COUGH)

WILL YA LOOK AT THAT! BOY, YOU GOT THE FUNNIEST LOOKING EYES I EVER SAW! WHY, HANGED IF THEY DON'T LOOK JUST LIKE YOUR TEDDY BEAR'S SHOE-BUTTON EYES! HA! WELL, IF THAT DON'T BEAT ALL!

SNIFF!



"I COULDN'T HELP IT IF I HAD FUNNY LOOKING EYES, COULD I? IT WASN'T MY FAULT, WAS IT? IT WASN'T MY FAULT..."

GEE, TEDDY BEAR... YOU AND MOMMY ARE THE ONLY FRIENDS I HAVE. I... I WISH I COULD SEE! THEN... (SNIFF) THEN MAYBE HE WOULDN'T MAKE FUN OF ME.

AND... AND I WISH I WAS BIG! THEN I COULD TAKE CARE OF MY MOMMY. I DON'T LIKE TO HEAR HER CRY SO MUCH! SHE NEVER USED TO CRY WHEN MY REAL DADDY WAS HERE!

...IT ISN'T RIGHT, IS IT, TEDDY BEAR? IT ISN'T RIGHT THAT SOMEONE GOOD LIKE MY MOMMY SHOULD ALWAYS CRY! (SNIFF) AND... AND...



...AND I CAN'T HELP IT IF I GOT FUNNY LOOKING EYES! (SOB-SOB) (SOB)



"I REMEMBER ONE NIGHT WHEN IT WAS ALMOST CHRISTMAS MY MOMMY WAS REAL SICK AND MY NEW DADDY HADN'T BEEN HOME FOR A FEW DAYS, SO THERE WASN'T ANY MONEY IN THE HOUSE. MY MOMMY WAS AWFUL SICK. I WAS IN BED WITH TEDDY BEAR TRYING TO KEEP WARM, WHEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THE DOOR BURST OPEN..."

WELL?? WHEREH EVERYBODY!! I'M HUNGRY AND I...

JED...







WHAT'S THE  
MATTER  
WITH YOU?!

JED... PLEASE, JED...  
I COULDN'T I'M SICK!  
JED... HELP ME...  
THE BOY...

"HE STARTED TO YELL AT MY  
MOMMY! I HEARD HIM! HE STARTED  
TO YELL AND MAKE HER CRY! HE  
SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT! MOMMY  
WAS SICK! AND THEN I GOT MAD AND  
JUMPED OUT OF BED..."



G'MON, TEDDY  
BEAR! WE GOTTA  
HELP MY MOMMY!



"I RAN OUT OF MY ROOM, YELLING  
AND CRYING AT THE SAME TIME..."

WELL, IF IT  
ISN'T LITTLE  
SHOE-  
BUTTON  
EYES!

YOU BIG BULLY!  
YOU LEAVE MY  
MOMMY ALONE!  
YOU HEAR?! YOU  
LEAVE HER ALONE!

"I WANTED TO HIT HIM! I WAS SO MAD, I WANTED TO  
HURT HIM A LOT! BUT I COULDN'T SEE WHERE I WAS  
GOING AND I TRIPPED OVER A CHAIR OR SOMETHING..."



"I REMEMBER LYING THERE ON THE FLOOR CRYING  
AWFUL HARD, AND THEN MY MOMMY WAS NEXT TO ME,  
HOLDING ME AND TRYING TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER.  
I HEARD MY NEW DADDY YELLING! HE HAD MY  
TEDDY BEAR!"



...I'LL FIX YOU, YOU NO-GOOD  
BRAT! AND I'LL FIX YOUR  
TEDDY BEAR TOO!



THERE! YUH HEAR ME, BOY?! I RIPPED OUT  
YOUR TEDDY BEAR'S EYES! NOW HE'S JUST  
LIKE YOU! HE CAN'T SEE ANYTHING EITHER!



"I HEARD MY NEW DADDY SLAM THE DOOR AS HE WENT AWAY... AND THEN IT WAS QUIET. MY MOMMY JUST HELD ME IN HER ARMS THERE ON THE FLOOR, AND FOR A LONG TIME SHE JUST CRIED AND KINDA ROCKED BACK AND FORTH..."

(SNIFF) GEE, MOMMY... HE DIDN'T HAVE TO HURT TEDDY BEAR, DID HE? IT'S ALL RIGHT IF HE HURTS ME, BUT NOT MY TEDDY BEAR...

OH, MY BABY... MY BABY... (SOB!)



"I WISH TEDDY BEAR HAD HIS EYES BACK, MOMMY! TEDDY BEAR NEEDS HIS EYES! I'M... I'M USED TO NOT HAVING EYES. MOMMY! DO YOU THINK... MOMMY! DO YOU THINK MAYBE SANTA CLAUS...?"

I DON'T KNOW, SON! I DON'T KNOW. (COUGH!)



"SANTA CLAUS NEVER BROUGHT ME ANYTHING BEFORE, MOMMY! DO YOU THINK MAYBE JUST THIS ONCE HE'D GIVE TEDDY BEAR BACK HIS EYES? JUST THIS ONCE, MOMMY?"

(SOB)  
(SOB)



"I DIDN'T KNOW THIS AT THE TIME, BUT THE NEXT DAY, MY MOMMY TOOK THE MONEY SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BUY MEDICINE WITH AND WENT OUT..."



"IT WAS AN AWFUL COLD DAY! I HAD TO STAY IN BED WITH MY CLOTHES ON TO KEEP WARM, AND MY MOMMY, SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE OUT IN THAT WEATHER. SHE WAS REAL SICK..."

I'LL... (COUGH) I'LL TAKE THIS PAIR, PLEASE! (COUGH)



"I HEARD HER COME BACK, AND AFTER WE TALKED FOR A LITTLE WHILE SHE MADE ME GET BACK IN BED SO I WOULDN'T CATCH COLD. I LISTENED TO HER MOVING AROUND THE KITCHEN. SHE WAS BREATHING KINDA FUNNY AND IT SEEMS SHE WAS COUGHING AN AWFUL LOT! I DON'T KNOW WHAT SHE WAS DOING, THOUGH."



"I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP! I DON'T KNOW JUST WHEN IT WAS, BUT I FELT SANTA CLAUS LIFT MY ARM AND PUT MY TEDDY BEAR BESIDE ME. I WAS HALF ASLEEP BUT I REMEMBER TOUCHING HIS FACE AND FEELING HIS EYES. AND I KNEW THEY WERE BRIGHT AND REAL PRETTY."





"THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I HEARD MY NEW DADDY YELLING. I GOT OUT OF BED. HE WAS YELLING AT MY MOMMY TO GET OUT OF BED... BUT SHE DIDN'T MOVE... SHE DIDN'T MOVE AT ALL..."

"NO GOOD TRAMP! GET OUTTA THAT BED. YOU HEAR?!"



"I LISTENED FOR MY MOMMY... AND I KNEW SHE WASN'T GOING TO GET UP. I KNEW SHE WASN'T EVER GOING TO GET UP AGAIN..."

"GET UP! I SAY! GET UP!"



(SNIFF) MOMMY, MOMMY, PLEASE WAKE UP... (SNIFF)

SHOE-BUTTON EYES!



"I DON'T KNOW WHY HE HIT ME. I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING! I REMEMBER HITTING MY HEAD AGAINST SOMETHING SHARP... AND THAT'S ALL..."



"BUT BEFORE CHRISTMAS MORNING, THERE WERE SOME AWFUL SCREAMS AND YELLS THAT CAME FROM OUR HOUSE. THE NOISE WOKE THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD..."



"... AND WHEN THEY BROKE THE DOOR DOWN, THEY SAW MY NEW DADDY LYING ON THE FLOOR. HE WAS DEAD AND HE WAS ALL RIPPED AND BLOODY LIKE SOME ANIMAL HAD GOT HIM. HIS EYES WERE TORN OUT... AND IN THEIR PLACE WERE THE NEW SHOE BUTTON EYES... ALL BRIGHT AND SHINY. THEY FOUND MY TEDDY BEAR IN A CORNER... WITHOUT HIS EYES, ALL COVERED WITH BLOOD... AND... AND HE WAS SMILING..."



AND THAT'S WHY THIS IS THE BEST CHRISTMAS I'VE EVER HAD! I CAN SEE! I CAN SEE EVERYTHING FROM WAY UP HERE! AND EVERYTHING'S SO PRETTY!



IF ANY OF YOU FOUL FIENDS THINK I'M GETTING MUSHY IN MY OLD AGE, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO GRIN AND BEAR IT (TEDDY, THAT IS), 'CAUSE I'M ALL CHOKED UP WITH THE YULETIDE SPIRIT! SO UNTIL NEXT TIME... MERRY XMAS!





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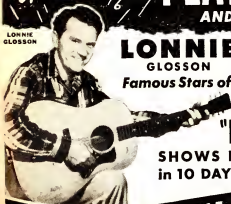
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FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



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# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEW, HEW? WELL, HERE I AM AGAIN, KIDDERS, WITH ANOTHER REVOLTING TARN REEKING WITH *FEAR*, OZZING WITH *SUSPENSE*, CRAMMED WITH *TENSION*, OVERFLOWING WITH *MOOD*, *ATMOSPHERE* AND SHEER *TERROUR*! YES, HERE IS A TALE THAT SEEMS TO HAVE *EVERYTHING*! SO PULL UP A *GRUD-COVERED GRANKSTONE* AND I'LL TELL YOU THE EXCITING STORY FROM THE *VAULT*, CALLED...

## TWIN BILL!



LARRY BANNISTER PRESSED BACK DEEPER INTO THE CORNER, UNTIL THE WALL BEAM OUT INTO HIS SPINE. HE SWIRLED WITH HIS COAT-SLEEVE AT THE PERSEVERATION RUNNING DOWN INTO HIS EYES, THICKENED HIS GRIP ON THE COLT .38! HIS HANDS WERE SLIMY-WET INSIDE HIS GLOVES, HIS LIPS FELT SWOLLEN AND PARCHED TO HIS FLICKING TONGUE. THIS WAS IT! ONLY A FEW MORE MINUTES AND IT WOULD BE ALLOVER! WHERE WERE THEY? WHY DID THEY TAKE SO LONG?





HE WAITED, SURROUNDED BY THE SILENCE, THE DARKNESS AND HE REMEMBERED HOW HE HAD PEERED INTO THIS VERY ROOM TWO AGES-LONG WEEKS AGO, WATCHING A MAN AND WOMAN IN THE THROES OF PASSION, SWEARING THEIR ETERNAL LOVE. AND THE WOMAN WAS HIS WIFE!



HE REMEMBERED HOW CAREFULLY SHE HAD TRIED TO HIDE THE FACT THAT SHE HAD A LOVER, BUT HE HADN'T BEEN FOOLED! SHARON HADN'T BEEN CLEVER ENOUGH! AND AS HE HAD LISTENED TO THEIR WARM, MELTING MURMURINGS, HE CHUCKLED VIOLENTLY, FINGERING THE TRIGGER OF HIS AUTOMATIC.



SHE THOUGHT HE HAD LEFT ON A BUSINESS TRIP AND, AS A REWARD FOR HIM, IT WAS PERFECT! HE REMEMBERED THE FRIGHTENED, GUILTY FACES STARING AT HIM IN THE DIM LIGHT.



A GUN COULD SPEAK A STRONG LANGUAGE AND THEY HAD KNOWN IT! QUIETLY, ALMOST DEFIANTLY, THEY HAD OBEYED HIS EVERY ORDER, GATHERING ALL HIS WIFE'S PERSONAL BELONGINGS... ANYTHING THAT WOULD LEAVE A TRACE.



HE REMEMBERED THE QUESTIONING GLANCE THAT HAD PASSED BETWEEN THEM, THEIR SILENT DETERMINATION NOT TO SHOW HIM THEIR FEAR...



THE ELEMENTS ALL BUT RAVAGED THE EARTH IN THEIR FURY AS THE TRIO GRIMLY STRUGGLED UPWARD! ONE HOUR LATER THEY STOPPED.



JUST PICK UP THOSE SHOVELS AND GO!





AS THE HOURS CRAWLED BY, THE SHOVELS SUNG DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE EDDING EARTH, AND IN THE FLASHES OF LIGHTNING, THE TWO LOVERS LABORED HEAVILY...



HE REMEMBERED HOW THEY HAD TALKED, TRYING SO DESPERATELY TO MAINTAIN THEIR BAKERY...



HE HAD WATCHED HIS WIFE'S LOVER FALL BACK SPRAWL ANKWARDLY IN THE PIT. SHARON FELL TO HIS SIDE, CRYING NOW, PLEADING FOR HIM TO WAKE UP. AND HE RECALLED HOW HE HAD SHOVED THE SUN IN HIS COAT POCKET, HOW HE HAD SNATCHED UP THE SHOVEL AND BEGUN TO APERS THE DIRT ON TOP OF THE TWO BODIES.



HE REMEMBERED THAT SHE HADN'T EVEN TRIED TO ESCAPE! SHE HAD REMAINED MOTIONLESS, HER ARMS AROUND HER LOVER, CRYING HOPELESSLY... HADN'T EVEN TRIED TO ESCAPE!





WHEN HIS TORMENTING RAGE HAD SUBSIDED, HE HAD SLUMPED TO HIS KNEES ON THE MOUND, HIS HANDS PRESSED DEEPLY IN THE MOIST, BLACK DIRT. HE SHUT HIS EYES, TRIED NOT TO HEAR THE HUSTLED CREES FROM BENEATH HIM.



IN A WHILE, HE HAD RISEN WEARILY TO HIS FEET AND STARTED BACK TO THE LODGE. HIS WRATH HAD LEFT HIM, AND IN ITS PLACE GREFT A FEELING OF APPREHENSION.



...AND AS HE STUMBLERD THROUGH THE WOODS, THERE SEEMED TO FOLLOW BEHIND HIM ON THE WIND, SIGHNFUL WAILS THAT SENT CHILLS UP HIS BACK AND SPED HIM FASTER AWAY.



HIS APPREHENSION HAD TURNED TO FEAR, AND HIS FEAR ALMOST TO PANIC! HE BRUSHED FRANTICALLY THROUGH THE TREES, JUMPED AT EVERY SCURRYING SOUND HE HEARD ABOVE THE ANGRY THUNDER. CLASHED, TRIPPED AND ROLL HEADLONG TIME AFTER TIME.



HE HAD SCRAMBLED DOWNWARD ALMOST BLINDLY, AND THE DENSE BLACKNESS OF THE FOREST SURROUNDED. ENVELOPED, TRIED LIKE A LIVING THING TO HALT HIS ESCAPE. THE LIGHTNING'S FURY SLASHED AT HIM, THE THUNDER CANNONADED HIS EARS, AS HE SLAMMED AGAIN AND AGAIN INTO TREES WHELED AND ALL BUT INVISIBLE BY THE RAIN AND THE NIGHT.



AND THEN HE HAD REACHED THE LODGE AND THE CLEARING! AND WITH A CRY IN HIS THROAT HE SAW HIS CAR. THE CAR THAT WOULD TAKE HIM AWAY FROM THIS HORRIBLE MADNESS!



HE REMEMBERED HOW GRATEFULLY HE HAD CLIMBERED INTO THE CAR, SLID BEHIND THE WHEEL, AND SLAMMED THE DOOR! HE REMEMBERED SIPPING GREAT MOUTHFULS OF AIR, PRESSING HIS CHEST TO RELIEVE THE POUNDING PAIN, SEEING IN THE DEADLY LIGHTNING FLASHES THE ROTTEN RIVERS STREAMING DOWN THE WINDSHIELD! HE FUMBLERD THE KEY INTO THE IGNITION... PRESSED THE STARTER... NOTHING!





HE FELT THE PANIC SETTING IN AND HE STOMPED THE STARTER AGAIN AND AGAIN! AGAIN! AGAIN AND AGAIN!



OH, GOD GOD... THE... THE BATTERY'S DEAD!

HE HAD TO GET BACK TO THE CITY! IN THE SHADOWS OF THE HUNTING LODGE HE SAW THEIR CAR! HE COULD USE *THEIR* BATTERY TO GET AWAY! HE RACED OVER, THREW UP THE HOOD.



AH! HERE IT IS!

HELP! I CAN'T USE THIS BATTERY! IT'S NOT POWERFUL ENOUGH!

THIS CAR HAS ONLY A *SIX-VOLT* BATTERY! AND *MY* CAR USES A *THREE-VOLT SYSTEM!* TWO SIX-VOLT JOBS WOULDN'T SUGGEST MY STARTER IN *NIGHT!* BUT I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! I'VE GOT TO!



DESPERATELY, HE OPENED THE CAR DOOR AND WITH A SIGN OF RELIEF SAW THE CAR KEYS HANGING LIMPLY IN THE IGNITION SLOT. HE SLID INTO THE CAR...



THIS IS MY ONLY CHANCE! I'LL HAVE TO BRING A NEW BATTERY BACK BEFORE I CAN GET MY CAR OUT OF HERE!

HE REMEMBERED HOW HE HAD SPED SO MADLY BACK TO THE CITY AND PARKED THE CAR ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN. HE REMEMBERED PHONING THE POLICE ABOUT HIS WIFE'S DISAPPEARANCE... AND THE QUESTIONS ABOUT HER THEY ASKED. HE RECALLED HOW HE PRETENDED TO BE SO CALM, HOW HE MAINTAINED THE FRONT OF EVERYDAY BUSINESS ROUTINE, WHILE DEEP INSIDE HE WAS TORN TO SHREDS, WORRYING WHETHER HIS CAR WOULD BE DISCOVERED...



TWO WEEKS HAD PASSED BEFORE HE HAD A CHANCE TO RETURN TO THE LODGE! HE HAD DRIVEN BACK TONIGHT, IN THE BORROWED CAR... A BRAND NEW TWELVE-VOLT BATTERY SITTING PATIENTLY ON THE FLOOR...

*TWO WEEKS!* NO ONE'S FOUND MY CAR OR THEM! IF SOMEONE HAD, I CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE HEARD OF IT BY *THIS TIME!* *SOON* MY THOUGHT THOSE MISSING PERSONS CO'D *NEVER* STOP ASKING ME QUESTIONS!



HE HAD MADE GOOD TIME TONIGHT! IT HAD BEEN ONLY A LITTLE AFTER MIDNIGHT WHEN HE PARKED THE CAR BESIDE THE LODGE AND GOT OUT! IT HAD BEEN SO... SO *QUIET!* SO DEEPLY *STILL!* SAVE FOR THE RUSTLING OF LEAVES AND AN OCCASIONAL THREATENING GROWL OF THUNDER, HE COULDN'T HEAR A SOUND...



THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE WILLIES! I BETTER GET ON WORK ON THAT BATTERY!



IT HADN'T TAKEN LONG TO INSTALL THE NEW BATTERY IN HIS CAR, BUT THE NOISES HE MADE WHILE DOING SO SEEMED TO ECHO FOR MILES IN THE UNEARTHLY SILENCE! HE HAD WIRED THE LOVER'S CAR UP ALL HIS FINGERPRINTS, HAD MADE CERTAIN THERE WERE NO CLUES...

IT'D FEEL BETTER IF I COULD HAVE SOTTEN THE CAR OUT OF HERE TWO WEEKS AGO... BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER! I'M ALL SET NOW!



HE HAD SLIPPED QUICKLY BEHIND THE WHEEL, BLANDED FURTIVELY AROUND WHILE HIS HANDS SEARCHED THROUGH HIS POCKETS FOR THE IGNITION KEY! MOVINGLY AT FIRST, THEN FRANTICALLY... THEN DESPERATELY!

NO! OH NO! HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID?? I FORGOT TO BRING THE CAR KEYS!!



BLAST IT! BLAST IT! I CAN'T LEAVE THE CAR HERE ANY LONGER! THERE MUST BE A WAY! THERE MUST BE...

WAIT! I'VE STILL GOT A CHANCE! ONE LAST, LUCKY CHANCE!



SHARON HAD A SET OF CAR KEYS... KEPT THEM IN HER PURSE? AND I BURIED THE PURSE WITH HER! I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE! I'VE GOT TO DIG UP THOSE KEYS!



HE HAD STARTED TO TREMBLE THEN. HE KNEW THAT AFTER TWO WEEKS, THE BODIES WOULD HAVE DECAYED. HE HADN'T LIKED THE IDEA ONE BIT!



THE SKY HAD BECOME MORE THREATENING AS HE CLIMBED LABORIOUSLY UPWARD. HE PRAYED IT WOULD NOT STORM. A CLOUDBURST LIKE THE LAST ONE WOULD SMOTHER HIS COURAGE COMPLETELY! HE WAS WORKING ONLY ON SHEER NERVE NOW! AN ETERNITY ENDED AS HE STARED DOWN AT THE GRAVE...

GOOD LORD! IT'S EMPTY!



HE REMEMBERED HOW A MILLION HORRIBLE THOUGHTS HAD FLITTED THROUGH HIS MIND, HOW THE STENCH FROM THE YAWNING PIT CONVULSED HIS STOMACH! YAGELY, HE RECALLED SMATCHING UP THE PURSE, STUTTERING AND HUMBLING MEANINGLESS, UNINTELLIGIBLE SOUNDS, SHOPING THROUGH THE PURSE...

AM I HERE THEY ARE? I FOUND THEM?





HE HAD DROPPED THE PURSE, CLUTCHED THE KEYS TIGHTLY TO HIS CHEST. THE FIRST WAVE OF PANIC HAD PASSES...

THEY *COULDN'T* HAVE BEEN FOUND! I WOULD'VE BEEN FOLLO! THERE'S ONLY ONE ROAD TO THE LODGE AND I WOULD HAVE BEEN ANYONE... *NO!* THEY'RE ALIVE! THEY MUST HAVE PUT THEIR WAY OUT RIGHT AFTER I LEFT! AND THEY'VE BEEN WAITING HERE...



THE MISTY DRIZZLE HAD GRADUALLY BECOME A HEAVY RAIN... AND AS THE RAIN BECAME MORE INTENSE, HIS BRAYING FACED! HE TURNED TO LOOK BACK! SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE SKY, HE SAW THE TWO OF THEM.

GOOD LORD! THEY'RE BEHIND ME! I CAN'T LET THEM GET ME OUT HERE!



AGAIN THE SHARP PANIC GRABBED HIM, AND HE RAN! HE WANTED TO REACH THE LODGE... TO MEET THEM WITHOUT THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE TREES AND THE BLASTED RAIN! HE HAD RUN FASTER... FASTER...



HE HAD REACHED THE LODGE CLEARING IN A FIT OF TERROR! HIS STUMBLING LEGS CARRIED HIM WEARILY TO HIS CAR. HE FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR, SLUMPED THROAT ON THE SEAT WHILE HIS TREMBLING HANDS HAD OPENED THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT AND GRABBED THE FLASHLIGHT THERE...



HELLO! NOW LET THEM COME FOR ME! I'M READY. I'M READY FOR THEM NOW!

HE HAD DUG INTO HIS COAT, PULLED OUT HIS AUTOMATIC, AND HE REMEMBERED THE COURAGE IT HAD GIVEN HIM! HE TURNED... STARTED BACK TO THE LODGE. IT BEGAN TO RAIN.

SURE! THEY KNOW I HAD TO COME BACK FOR MY CAR, SO THEY WAITED FOR ME! THEY WANT TO GET *EVEN!*

THEY'RE PROBABLY BACK AT THE LODGE NOW! WELL, *THIS* TIME I'LL MAKE *SURE* THEY'RE DEAD!



THERE HAD BEEN A POWERFUL... IN HIS HAND, BUT SOMEHOW IT SEEMED INEFFECTUAL... ALMOST USELESS! HE HAD NO CONCRETE REASONS... BUT HIS MOUNTING FEAR WAS REASON ENOUGH.



HE HAD WALKED BRIEFLY THROUGH THE TALL WET GRASS TO THE LODGE, HAD CLIMBED THE WOODEN STEPS TO THE WOODEN PORCH, HAD OPENED THE WOODEN DOOR AND STOPPED INTO THE WARM, DRY, PITCH-BLACKNESS! HE CLOSED THE DOOR, GROPE HIS WAY ACROSS THE ROOM TO A CORNER... AND WAITED...





HE HAD WAITED AND LISTENED TO THE RAIN WHISPERING TO THE LEAVES AND THE BLADES OF GRASS... UNTIL HE HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE SHUFFLING, RUSTLING SOUND OF THEIR FOOTSTEPS OUTSIDE...



NOW HE PRESSED BACK DEEPER INTO THE CORNER, TIGHTENED THE GRIP ON HIS .38! THIS WAS IT! ONLY A FEW MORE MINUTES! HE HEARD THEM MOUNTING THE STEPS TO THE PORCH...



HE SHOOK AT THE PERSPIRATION WITH HIS COAT SLEEVE! LONG MINUTES PASSED, AND THEN THE DOOR CREAKED SLOWLY OPEN! AN UNBEARABLE, NAUSEATING STENCH FORTHWENT THE ROOM...



HE GRIPPED HIS AUTOMATIC TIGHTER STILL TO CONTROL THE BRACING HAND! IN THE INKY BLACKNESS HE HEARD THEIR STEPS MOVING TOWARD HIM ACROSS THE ROOM... CLOSER! *CLOSER!* AND THE HORRIBLE, PUNGENT GORR SMELL STROGGED, GASSING HIM, AND HIS ENTIRE BODY WAS CONVULSED WITH VIOLENT SHIVERS AND HIS NERVES WERE SPUTTERING FROM THE STRAIN...



OKAY! OKAY!  
I KNOW YOU'RE  
THERE!

HE SNAPPED ON THE FLASH-LIGHT!!



IN A BARRAGE, DESPERATE FRENZY, HE RAISED HIS GUN, BLASTED THE MONSTROSITY WITH A STACCATO OF LEAD... SAW THE SHELLS RIP AND TEAR THROUGH, SMOTHERING SOME INTO FRAGMENTS, DECAYED, MANGLED FLESH INTO SMITHRENS! BUT IT DIDN'T STOP... IT CAME SHROUING TOWARD HIM, CLOSER AND CLOSER...



BLAM

BLAM  
BLAM  
BLAM

AND THEN HIS GUN CLATTERED HAPLESSLY TO THE FLOOR AND HE SCREAMED HYSTERICALLY! THE TWO-HEADED FIGHTING THING ENVELOPED HIM IN AN EMBRACE OF DEATH AND THE AGONYING, ALL-CONSUMING PIERCE OF DEATH FLOODED HIS BODY! IT WAS THEN, AS HIS LIFE LEFT HIM, THAT HE REMEMBERED IT WAS *JOE* WHO HAD PROMISED SHARON AND HIS LOVER THEY WOULD BE TOGETHER FOREVER!

HEH, HEH! WELL, I WISH I COULD TELL YOU *IN DETAIL* JUST WHAT SHARON AND HER LOVER *SAD* TO LARRY, BUT AFTER ALL... HOW REVOLTING CAN ONE GET? LARRY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HE COULD NEVER HAVE WON! *EVERYBODY*



KNOWS TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN *ONE!* WELL, ENOUGH OF THIS *LOVE-BARKING!* THE *CRYPT-KEEPER* IS GETTING MORE SO! EYES *RIGHT!* *RIGHT!* *RIGHT!*



# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! SO NICE OF YOU FOUL FENDS TO VISIT WITH ME AGAIN! IT'S SO HEARTWARMING TO KNOW THAT I AM NOT ALONE IN MY PLEASURE OF THE HORRORS AND GRIEVOUS DEEDS THAT ARE FOUND HERE IN THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*! YES, THIS IS *THE CRYPT* AFTER, YOUR OLD STAND-BY, BRINGING YOU ANOTHER *DEVILISH* DRAMA OF LIFE'S WICKEDNESS! I CALL THIS LITTLE SWEET-PROVOKER

## WITCH WITCH'S WITCH!



EVERYONE IN THE TINY EUROPEAN VILLAGE OF SLUMSTADT KNEW THEY WERE COMING. A WICKED AND EVIL HOLDSMAN HAD TRAVELED TO THE CITY ON BUSINESS... AND TWO DAYS LATER HAD SENT WORD THAT HE HAD *MARRIED*! IN THE TOWN SQUARE, PEOPLE Huddled TOGETHER WHISPERING OF THE HORRIBLE MANNER IN WHICH HE HAD TREATED ALICIA GRÜNEWALD TO WHOM HE HAD BEEN BETROTHED SINCE CHILDHOOD. THE TOWN WAS UTTERLY ASHAMED AT THE SCANDAL...

OH, RICHT I'M SO AFRAID!  
WHAT WILL THEY THINK  
OF ME?

NOW DON'T YOU WORRY, HELENA!  
THEY'RE SURE TO  
LOVE YOU. COME,  
LET'S GO IN.





THEY ENTERED THE HOUSE. IN THE LIVING ROOM THEY FACED A HOSTILE TRIO... HIS MOTHER, HIS EX-FIANCÉE, AND HER MOTHER!





THE TOWN HUMMED WITH MALICIOUS GOSSIP! EVERYONE KNEW THAT ERIC'S MOTHER WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HELENA, BUT IT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING! A WEEK LATER ERIC'S MOTHER SUDDENLY DIED IN GREAT AGONY. . .



HELENA WAS TOO ILL TO ATTEND THE FUNERAL, BUT THE TOWNSPEOPLE ASSEMBLED THERE IN DROVES. . .

I HEARD SHE WAS TOO SICK TO COME! **PAW!** SHE BROUGHT **DEATH** TO A **WONDERFUL WOMAN!** SHE ISN'T HERE BECAUSE SHE'S JUST A **PAGAN, HEARTLESS** GIRL, IF YOU **ASK ME!**



IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, THE RUMORS SPREAD AND GREW MORE INTENSE. WITH EACH REPETITION. . .

YA' MEAN SHE **DELIBERATELY** KILLED ERIC'S MOTHER? OF COURSE! BUT THEY CAN'T **PROVE** IT! SHE'S A **MEAN ONE**, SHE IS!



AND ONE MORNING, HER EYES STILL RED FROM TEARS, HELENA WAS VISITED BY MEMBERS OF THE TOWN'S CHURCH GROUP. . .

OR, IT'S SO KIND OF YOU TO VISIT! I. . . IF YOU DON'T MIND, THIS IS **NOT** A SOCIAL CALL! WE ARE HERE **ONLY** BECAUSE IT IS OUR **DUTY!**



YOUR. . . **DUTY?** YES! IN VIEW OF ALL THE SCANDALOUS EVENTS THAT HAVE CENTERED AROUND YOU SINCE YOUR ARRIVAL HERE, WE FEEL THAT WE MUST ASK YOU **NOT** TO ATTEND OUR MEETINGS!



OH, BUT. . . PLEASE! IF YOU'LL ONLY LISTEN TO MY. . . THIS IS NOTHING **PERSONAL**, YOU UNDERSTAND, BUT TO INSURE THE **MORAL** CHARACTER OF OUR LITTLE CHILDREN, IT IS A **NECESSITY!** GOOD DAY!



TO HELENA, THE TENDER, COMFORTING WORDS OF HER HUSBAND WERE HER ONLY SOLACE. SHE WAS ALL SO HELPLESS TO STEM THE FLOODING TIDE OF HATE THAT WAS MUSHROOMING! IT WAS BUT A FEW DAYS LATER THAT THE CHURCH LEADER LAPPED INTO A COMA. . .

SHE WON'T WAKE UP! SHE SLEEPS LIKE THE **DEAD!** EVER SINCE ERIC BROUGHT THAT WOMAN HERE, THERE'S BEEN NOTHING BUT **TROUBLE!** **SHE** CAUSED THIS!





THE UNKNOWN CAUSE OF THE CHURCHWOMAN'S COMA  
SAVE HER FROM FANTASTIC STORIES BY THE SUPERSTITIOUS,  
AND ALICIA'S MOTHER EASILY DID HER SHARE OF IT...

THERE'S SOMETHING VERY STRANGE AND *EVIL* ABOUT  
THAT WOMAN, MARK MY WORDS! EVERYONE WHO HAS  
CROSSED HER PATH HAS SUFFERED *DREADFULLY*!  
IT'S AS IF AN *EVIL SPIRIT* WERE AT WORK!



THE WAY ERIC IS *BLIND* TO WHAT'S GOING ON, YOU'D BE  
SURE HE HAD A *SPELL* CAST ON HIM! THAT'S THE ONLY  
REASON I CAN SEE FOR HIS HAVING *MARRIED* HER  
INSTEAD OF MY POOR, BROKEN-HEARTED ALICIA! AND AS  
SOON AS SHE CAME HERE... *POOF!* ERIC'S MOTHER  
*DIED!*



...AND THEN THE LEADER OF OUR  
CHURCH SAID! YOU *KNOW* WHAT  
HAPPENED TO *HER*? AND IT WAS  
RIGHT AFTER SHE WISHED THAT  
WOMAN! I TELL YOU  
THAT WOMAN HAS A  
*STRANGE POWER*...  
THE POWER OF A  
*WITCH!*



YES! HOW *ELSE* CAN YOU EXPLAIN  
THE GOINGS-ON SINCE SHE CAME  
HERE? ONLY A *WITCH* CAN CAST  
*SPELLS!* ONLY SOMEONE WHO  
CONQUERS UP *EVIL SPIRITS* CAN  
CAUSE PEOPLE TO SLEEP LIKE  
THE DEAD!



SHE COMMUNES WITH THE *DEVIL*!  
BY HEAVEN, THERE ARE MOMENTS  
WHEN I *FEAR*  
FOR MY LIFE!



IT WAS BUT A SHORT TIME LATER THAT ALICIA'S  
MOTHER AND HER TERRIFIED FRIENDS WERE CROSSING  
THE TOWN SQUARE. SUDDENLY THEY STOPPED, TREM-  
BLING! THEY SAW HELENA STANDING BEFORE A SHOP  
WINDOW ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SQUARE, AND  
SUDDENLY SHE TURNED. FOR A MOMENT HER GAZE  
RESTED ON ALICIA'S MOTHER...



...WHO PROMPTLY STAGGERED AND FELL DEAD!





DEARLY FRIGHTENED, HELENA PANICFULLY  
SAID THE SHOUTS RISING IN HER EARS...

A WITCH! SHE'S  
THE DEVIL'S OWN!  
SHE DID IT! WE  
SAW HER DO IT!  
SHE'S A WITCH!



THE TOWNFOLK'S MUTTERINGS GROW IN ANGER AND FEAR! EVERY ILL  
FORTUNE, HOWEVER SMALL OR RIDICULOUS, WAS ATTRIBUTED TO  
HELENA AND CHILDISH FAMILIES BECAME HORRIBLE FACTS!

YES! SHE! I SEEN IT  
WITH MY OWN EYES!  
THREE CHILDREN...  
FLYIN' OVER MY  
BARN!

IT ISN'T SAFE TO BE  
ON THE STREETS, NOT  
WITH *HER* ROAMIN'  
AROUND! I TELL YOU,  
SOMETHIN' GUMMA  
BE DONE!

TOLD HER I  
WOULDN'T ALLOW  
HER IN MY STORE!  
NEXT THING Y'KNOW,  
MY STORE BURNED  
TO THE GROUND!



THE ENTIRE TOWN WAS PRESENT AT  
THE BURIAL OF ALICIA'S MOTHERFAND  
AS EVERYONE SMELT IN PRAYER, ALICIA  
SUDDENLY LOOKED SKYWARD AND  
SCREAMED!

I SEE HER!  
SHE'S COMING  
FOR ME! SHE  
WANTS TO KILL ME!



THE WITCH! I  
SEE THE WITCH!  
AAGGH!  
MY HEART!

GLORY BE!  
THE WITCH IS  
TRYING TO  
KILL ME!



DO SOMETHING!  
THE PAIN! SHE'S  
TRYING TO TEAR  
MY HEART OUT!  
AAAAGGH!

DO SOME-  
THING, YOU  
IDIOTS!  
DON'T JUST  
STAND  
THERE!



WE GOT TO  
PUT AN END  
TO THIS!

KILL  
THE  
WITCH!

BURN HER!  
BURN THE  
WITCH!



THE FURY OF THE MOB FLARED AND SPILLED LIKE WILDFIRE! TORCHES WERE  
LIT, AND AMID THE SCREAMING FRENZY OF THE MARCHING PEOPLE, SHOUTS  
WERE HEARD THAT HERALDED HELENA'S DOOM!





AS THE HOSTILE MOB DREW CLOSE, HELENA WAS ALMOST HYSTERICAL WITH FEAR....

ERIC! THEY'VE GONE CRAZY! DON'T LET THEM GET ME, ERIC! YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO ANYTHING! ERIC! DON'T LET THEM GET ME!

DON'T WORRY, HELENA! I'LL PROTECT YOU!

AND THEN THE MOB CRASHED INTO THE HOUSE, FILLING THE ROOMS, WRECKING FURNITURE, STARTING FIRES, THROWING HER TO THE WALL.

WE HAVE YOU NOW, WITCH! YOU WON'T DO ANY MORE KILLING!

WOMAN! PLEASE! I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING! OH, PLEASE BELIEVE ME! ERIC! HELP ME!

GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! GET... UNWANT!

BE STILL! CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT SHE'S UP TO, MAN? WHEN THIS IS OVER, YOU'LL THANK US!

HEY! NO!

I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING! OH, GOD, MAKE THEM BELIEVE ME! I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING! PLEASE! PLEASE!

LOOK HERE! WE FOUND THIS DOLL IN THE ATTIC... WITH A PIN IN ITS HEART!

AHHA! NOW WE HAVE PROOF! THIS IS HOW YOU TRIED TO KILL ALICIA! THIS IS WHY SHE WAS SCREAMING AND DYING!

WOMAN! YOU'RE ALL WRONG! ALICIA SAID ERIC THAT DOLL FEARED AND IT'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE PINS IN IT! IT'S A PIN-CUSHION!

CAN'T YOU SEE! ALICIA WAS ANGRY BECAUSE I MARRIED ERIC! SHE'S TRYING TO GET EVEN! SHE WAS ONLY FAKING! JUST PRETENDING TO BE DYING!

LIAR! KILL THE WITCH! BURN HER!!

ERIC! HELP ME!  
KILL HER!  
AAAGHH! HER!  
BURN ERIC!



PANDEMONIUM RACED THROUGH THE ROOM! IN THE MAD CONFUSION HELENA WAS PUMMELED AND KICKED! SHE SAW ERIC FIGHTING DESPERATELY, HEARD THE DULL BLAST OF A PISTOL! ERIC TUMBLED TO THE FLOOR...



ERIC! ERIC! WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU? ERIC!

SHE FELT HERSELF DRAINED, SCREAMING AND CLIMBING TO THE TOWN SQUARE! THE ANGRY ROAR OF THE MOB FLOODED HER EARS AND HER ENTIRE BODY ACHED FROM COUNTLESS BLOWS! FLEETINGLY, SHE SAW THE HUGE FIRE...



STOP IT! (SHEM!) OH PLEASE! STOP IT!!

WE'LL NOT STOP NOW TILL YOUR BODY BE ASHES!

THEN SUDDENLY HER STRENGTH LEFT AND SHE CEASED FIGHTING! SHE LET THEM PLACE HER ON A BARREL FOR THE CROWD TO SEE...



AT SIGHT OF HER, THE HYSTERICAL MOB ROARED EVEN LOUDER! SHE HUNG HER HEAD... COVERED HER FACE WITH HER HANDS...



AT LENGTH SHE RAISED HER HEAD, GAZED OVER THE BOILING FACES. SHE LIFTED HER ARMS TO THE SKY...



REGA FLEXIS MURI!!



HEY, HEY! WATCH ALL GOES TO SHOW, YOU CAN'T BE SURE OF NOTHING! YET HELENA REALLY WAS A GENUINE WITCH, BUT SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO ACTIVE! CASTING ALL THOSE SPELLS NEARLY SPILLED HER DOOM! HEY! AND POOR ETC.

HE GOT THE SHOT END OF IT, DIDN'T HE? WELL, KAC'S WAITING, SO TILL NEXT TIME! (END)



THE END



# COOLER

The drop from the high stone wall passed Scott right down to his toes, his boots crushed easily in the snow as he began to run. For a divided yard he staggered erratically, no sound detection, in case he'd have seen. At last he reached a grove of ice-bung trees and stopped in such his boots. He turned quickly, his stiffened hands thrashing at his arms and shoulders to keep the circulation moving. For a moment his eyes roved from one end of the huge stone wall to the other, from deep in his throat a soft whine of satisfaction welled up. *Coolest Person*, he whispered in triumph. *The rock-pile no one ever feared out of I made it . . . they'll never handle ME back into that lousy cooler!*

A sudden chill made Scott's body tremble violently. He spat once, to show his contempt for Coolest, then began to crawl across the frozen ground toward the Lake. The way he'd figured it, back there in the cooler, this was the last time to try a break-out. A little cold, perhaps . . . but when he could be cross the Lake which completely surrounded the island on which the prison stood? The last cold snap, he'd been telling himself, and the Lake would freeze over solid. The snow had come . . . it must be close to zero right now!

He was crossing the dirty grey ice, warily watching the dark patches which meant water close to the surface, when he heard the alarm. They'd be searching the Lake for him in another minute. Scott realized . . . now enough time to reach the opposite shore. He was concerned, unless . . . unless . . .

Almost directly in front of him he saw it: a jagged hole cut in the thick ice, probably by a hammer doing some illegal fishing. Carefully, rock by rock, Scott lowered himself through the hole into the frigid water. He heard the first crash of footings past as he disappeared completely into the gaping hole and ducked

out of sight under the heavy cover of ice surrounding the Lake.

It was painfully cold, with water up to his chest and only a few inches of air between the water line and the ice sheet overhead . . . but it was his only chance. Then the crash of feet came closer, right toward him it seemed, and Scott dove deep and paddled frantically to get away from the hole. For a full minute he swam blindly underwater, then, when he thought his head would burst from the pressure, he did upswim and drew a deep breath in the tiny corridor of air between the water and the ice. Five minutes he waited in silence, listening intently. When he was sure his pursuers had gone, he began searching for the hole in the ice, so that he could climb out and get to the opposite shore.

He seemed to have lost it completely . . . the jagged entrance to this watery hell-hole. He thrashed around in ever more hysterical circles, but the hole had somehow vanished without trace. His face grew raw and bloody from his frantic attempts to punch a new hole in the ice, but still there was no way out of his freezing prison.

Fury pin-points of pain began to stab at his flesh in a thousand parts of his body, his arms and legs seemed curiously numb and useless. His last scream of terror echoed dully through the narrow corridor of sub-zero air past a second before his brain seemed to explode into a riot of white-cold sticks. Then a strange feeling of tranquility took possession of him . . . for a moment he felt warm and drowsy. Though his lips were stiff with frost he managed to smile feebly before he started slowly to slide under the water.

*They'll never take me back to the cooler,* he thought as his body dodged downwards through the freezing water.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION, REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 19, 1918 AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1932, AND JULY 1, 1948 (Title 49, United States Code Section 3682) of VALLEY OF HONORON published bi-monthly at New York, N.Y. for October 1, 1953.

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, L.I. Pub. Co. Inc., 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y.; Editor, John T. Craig, 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y.; Managing Editor, William M. Gaines, 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y.; Business manager, Frank B. Lee, 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.) L.I. Pub. Co. Inc., 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y. Wm. M. Gaines, 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y. J. K. Gaines, 225 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y.

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5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semi-weekly, and tri-weekly newspapers only.)

(Signed) FRANK B. LEE, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of September, 1953.

Etienne De Stefano, Notary Public. (My commission expires March 29, 1954.)

[SEAL]





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## THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! What a laugh! Just saw the proofs of that two-page spread on my old editor Guiney in the March issue of the now "vest-pocket" size photo mag called TOPS. What's got me snickering is the photo they got of him! What a fat old! None of the large ones are that bad enough though some real cute ones are!

[illegible]

### Design: Qualitative Research

Even since the early months of 1960, E.C. publications have been the very best chronicle. This was due to the wonderful writing, editing, and clarity in each and every E.C. issue. And during those four years, all of the authors, editors, and readers have contributed to the development of "publishing in the sciences." Not only in the form of comments, but in the stories or well. The readers used to be able to write in and take for their favorite story, which always gave the writers a chance for their names to be mentioned. All seems to have started in the advancing and improvement of E.C. during the four years of "More Than" more.

But now he has got to the real point of my father. There is one other point on your list, the whole idea to get me to read of his. He writes like a good writer, he has to be called "Lord of the Flies" and "The Great Gatsby" in addition to doing his debut. Of course I'm referring to Johnny Chang. But he seems to be in exactly the same position as he was 4 years ago. Lead story cover, lead story cover. The boy is depressed, and I hope that in the near future he'll get the recognition he really deserves.

—Neil Shuman

**Paul Springer**  
**Chair, American Medical Association**

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I hope you are satisfied! This crank Group is now my EDITOR - a denotation of I want you and me! And now he not only draws the cover and lead story - but writes all four!

I enjoy reading your comics so much that I feel I must write and tell you. In this country, it is so hard to get American comics that when I do get one, I prize it highly. I have managed to obtain one of your good E.C. comics and I would not sell them for a penny! Will you please get me a copy?

Michaela Bagg  
JP Susan Brown  
Arlene Fisher, Bristol  
President

To see how healthy you are to be American, you can get all the E.C. stamps you want! Plant Molokini is STARVED for good literature! Go on... send us your address at once, so we can deliver it to you promptly as green. If owned by a firm, company, or other units of each individual member, must be green.) L.L. Woe M. Gerson 233 Lafayette St., New York 12, N.Y.

3. That the known beneficiaries, mortgagees, or a more or total amount of bonds, mortgagees, or other

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where of the company as trustees or in any other fiduciary such trustee is acting; also the statements in the books as to the circumstances and conditions under which the books of the company as trustees, hold stock as

5. The average number of copies of each issue or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months is required from daily, weekly, semiweekly, and

1000

as other horror books except EC's. To quote him: "I have tried other horror books, but they irritated my skin. But when I tried yours, with the two day test, I found yours to be THE book for me! Not only high quality paper, but the only one containing 100% chlorophyll! They're the greatest since the invention of the Green and Schick pens!" How about that?

Joseph Lawrence  
Norm Augustine, Chairman

To see? We're the only outfit approved by England, girls, parents, and dogs!

I would like to say that your column are the most entertaining and relaxing column put out. My Dad used to take all my EC's and burn them, then one day he happened to read one and was happy with everyone else to get one of the new EC's that was covered at our neighborhood.

Durre, DeChenne  
James Hobbes, Editor

**Abstract**

What's all the ruckus about your E.C. contest? So what if they are the best—must you make a point of it? Cut out all the fuss. Who cares? I'm only 17 now, but I'll probably be reading them when I'm 50.

**First Awarded**  
1952

Just keep reading them and you won't live to regret it!

I pointed out to Hagan exactly the other day I didn't hear it, and thanked through all in case how it composed with E.C. since they used "Superdior" sheet title. I had the mostest art work and plate that I had ever seen. They also copied two of their stories from one of the stories in House of Fear and came out of House No. 26. It was even a very interesting. I have been around E.C. a lot. I guess and I know every tale perfectly but one of those instances ended me completely because it used almost every word on a

Energy Management  
Management of Energy Costs

Unfortunately, it can't come, Larry! Just not yet!

As the wise Englishman said, 'It's better than  
 not doing it at all'.

**Ari Folman**  
 Film Director, U.S.

**Task 2**

[illegible]

The Youth Keeper  
Room 708, Dept. Money  
215 Lafayette St.  
St. N. D. 58102



THE DEN WAS QUIET. THE FRAGRANT DOOR OF OPIUM FLOATED TO THE CEILING AND LIKE A HEAVY CURTAIN IT DEADENED THE CHINATOWN STREET NOISES, PUSHED THEM FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY TO THE REALM OF THE UNREAL ... AND THE SMOKERS LAY MOTIONLESS, REVELING IN THEIR OWN PAINFUL WORLD OF DREAMS. LISTEN NOW AS *CHEN CHU FANG* TELLS YOU HIS STORY IN HIS OWN WORDS. IT'S ENTITLED...

# PIPE-DREAM



MY NAME IS *CHEN CHU FANG* AND IT IS WITH MUCH BOWROW IN MY HEART THAT I TELL YOU THIS TALE. BUT WITHIN ME, A SMALL VOICE SAYS THAT IT MUST BE TOLD. ... AND SO BE IT.

By *Wrightson*



PLEASE DO NOT THINK ILL OF ME FOR FREQUENTING SUCH A PLACE AS THIS, BUT INSTEAD, BE KINDLY AND... AND UNDERSTANDING, FOR MY GRIEF IS GREAT. I HAVE BEEN VISITING HERE FOR MANY YEARS. IT IS MY ONLY SOLACE... AND FOR A KINDLY OLD MAN SUCH AS I WITH BUT FEW YEARS TO WAIT, IT IS HARMLESS ENOUGH. IS IT NOT?



IT WOULD BE A GREAT FALSHOOD TO SAY THAT I AM OF STRONG CHARACTER. I HAVE NEVER BEEN THAT. IT IS ONLY HERE, IN THIS ROOM OF DAY-DREAMS, THAT I BECOME STRONG AND IMPORTANT. (SIGH)



"MY STORY GOES BACK PERHAPS A DOZEN SUMMERS. MY WIFE WAS A GOOD WOMAN... A *STRONG* WOMAN, SHE BORE THE BURDEN THAT I WAS TOO WEAK TO CARRY."



"SUCH A GOOD WOMAN. NEVER CAN I RECALL A WORD OF COMPLAINT FROM HER... EVEN THOUGH SHE BUT KNEW IT WAS NOT TO THE PARK I WALKED... BUT TO THE HOUSE OF DREAMS. I REMEMBER WELL HOW I CHASED MYSELF THAT BLACK DAY... UNTIL MY BRAIN WAS LULLED."



"NEVER BEFORE THAT DAY HAD MY DREAMS CONCERNED MY GOOD WIFE. BUT I WAS FILLED TO OVERFLOWING WITH LOVE FOR HER... AND IT WAS BEYOND MY CONTROL..."

"I DREAMED OF HER WONDEROUS FAITH AND DEVOTION TO MYSELF AND OUR CHILDREN... AND FOR NO REASON, I DREAMED OF THE SADNESS THAT WOULD BE MINE, WERE SHE TO DIE."

"IN GREAT DETAIL, I DREAMED THE BIRDS WOULD NOT SING, AND THE FLOWERS WOULD BOW THEIR FRAGRANT HEADS TO JOIN ME IN MY SORROW..."



"A! IT HAD INDEED BEEN A SAD DREAM, BUT IT HAD MADE ME KEENLY AWARE THAT I WAS A FORTUNATE MAN. A *POOR* FORTUNATE MAN TO POSSESS SUCH A TREASURE! AND I HAD RETURNED HOME WITH A LIGHTNESS OF HEART THAT WAS MOST PLEASING, BUT IT PROVED TO BE A BLACK DAY... FOR THE FIRST OF MY GREAT SORROWS HAD FALLEN..."

"HAD I NOT REASON TO GRIEVE? WHAT WAS TO BECOME OF US? I WAS AWARE OF MY DUTY TO MY TWO CHILDREN. OH YES! AND BY THE BEARD OF MY FINE, I YOUNG THAT DAY TO BEGIN ARIEN..."





"AH, BUT IT IS SAD. MY SO HONORABLE INTENTIONS  
FACED LIKE SMOKE BEFORE THE WIND. AND WERE IT  
NOT FOR THE EFFORTS OF MY SON, WE WOULD NOT  
HAVE HAD FOOD IN OUR MOUTHS, NOR EVEN A ROOF  
ABOVE OUR HEADS..."



"HERE, MY FATHER, IS MONEY  
WITH WHICH TO PAY THE RENT!"

"AH, MY SON! GREATLY  
BLESSED AM I, A WEAK  
OLD MAN, TO HAVE  
FATHERED ONE WHO  
PROVIDES AS YOU!"

"BUT AGAIN, MY GLADNESS WAS SHORT-LIVED. THE WAR  
WAS CALLING FOR MEN... AND MY SON WAS NO EXCEPTION!"



"BUT I HAD BEEN **DRAFTED**,  
FATHER! WHO, NOW, WILL CARE  
FOR YOU AND MY SISTER?"

"SURELY THERE IS NO  
CAUSE FOR YOU TO  
WORRY! I, NOW, WILL  
UPHOLD THE DUTY  
WHICH FOR SO LONG  
I HAVE SHIRKED!"

"THAT NIGHT I VISITED THIS PLACE.  
IN MY HEART I GRIED FOR MY SON  
WHO WOULD LEAVE US... AND SO  
DID I CRY IN MY SMOKE DREAMS..."



"I SAW IN MY DREAMS THE ANGER  
THROUGH WHICH HE MUST PASS,  
THE HAUNTING FEAR WHICH I KNEW  
WOULD CROWN HIS EVERY HOUR..."



"I SAW THE FACE OF THE ENEMY! I  
FELT THE IMPACT OF SHELLS EXPLOD-  
ING, SAW THE GREAT BLOODSHED..."



"...AND I DREAMED MY ONLY SON WOULD DIE..."



"[TIGHT] THE HOUR WAS LATE WHEN I ARRIVED HOME. I  
HAD PLEDGED MYSELF TO CARE FOR MY DAUGHTER IN MY  
SON'S ABSENCE. *THIS* TIME, SURELY, I WOULD NOT FAIL!  
YET I WAS GRIETED WITH BUT ANOTHER GREAT SORROW..."



"NO! NO, THIS CANNOT  
BE! MY SON DEAD?"

"THAT'S RIGHT, GIRL! HAD AN  
AUTO ACCIDENT ON THE WAY  
HOME FROM HIS SOLD-ARMY  
PARTY!"



"THE GODS WERE SURELY PUNISHING ME FOR MY LACK OF HONOR! AMENDS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE BY MY HUMBLE BEING TO ADORE FOR THE MISFORTUNES I HAVE CAUSED. AT ALL COSTS I HAD TO PROTECT AND CHERISH THE WELFARE OF MY TREASURED DAUGHTER..."



BUT HE IS NOT FOR YOU, MY CHILD? HE IS NOT A GOOD MAN... HE IS ALL WICKEDNESS!

YOU ARE SO WRONG, FATHER! HE LOVES ME! IS THAT NOT PROOF ENOUGH OF HIS GOOD HEART?

"YEA, THOUGH I TRIED WITH ALL MY POWER TO CONVINCE MY DAUGHTER OF HER FOLLY, I WENT UNHEARD... FOR NO MAN ON THE EARTH CAN SPEAK LOUD ENOUGH FOR A GIRL TO HEAR WHEN HER HEART IS IN THE CLOUDS, IS IT NOT SO?"



...NOW MY BRIGHTEST JEWEL HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM ME! I WISH GLADNESS FOREVER, MY DAUGHTER, WHY YOUR JOY INCREASE A THOUSAND FOLD!

THANK YOU, MY FATHER! THIS IS INDEED THE HAPPIEST MOMENT IN MY LIFE. I SHALL HAVE NO REGRETS!

"BUT SHE HAD REGRETS. IN THE SPAN OF SIX MONTHS THERE WERE MANY..."



OH, MY FATHER! IT IS UNCHANGABLE! I AM BUT A SLAVE TO HIM! HE TREATS ME AS I WERE A STRANGER, AND NEVER EVER DOES HE HAVE A SMILE OR A KIND WORD FOR ME! WHATEVER SHALL I DO?

THERE IS NOTHING YOU MUST DO, MY CHILD. IT IS TOO LATE. YOU HAVE A HUSBAND AND YOU MUST REMAIN WITH HIM!



BUT, FATHER! HE IS CRUEL! SEE? THESE BRUISES! HE HAS STRUCK ME MANY TIMES!

IT IS OF NO CONSEQUENCE. YOU ARE A GIRL OF CHINA, AND MY DAUGHTER. YOU MUST DO NOTHING TO BRING A DISGRACE UPON US! YOU HAVE TAKEN A VOW TO BE WITH THE MAN OF YOUR CHOICE. YOU CANNOT RETRACE THE PATH YOU YOURSELF HAVE MADE!



TRUE... IT WILL BE A DIFFICULT TASK. BUT THERE IS NO OTHER COURSE THAT, WITH HONOR, YOU COULD TAKE? I GRIEVE DEEPLY BUT... IT STILL DOES NOT CHANGE! YOU CAN ONLY BE FREE WHEN HE IS DEAD!

OH! YES, MY FATHER! YOUR WORDS ARE WISE AND TRUE! I MUST DO NOTHING! I MUST RESIGN MYSELF TO MY FATE!



"I HAD WATCHED TEARS WETTING MY CHEEKS, AS SHE HAD SLOWLY WALKED FROM ME, TO RETURN TO HER MASTER. DID IT NOT SEEM UNFAIR THAT ONE SO YOUNG, SO FAIR, SHOULD SUFFER SO? IT WAS THEN THAT I KNEW I HAD TO ASK MYSELF TO RELIEVE MY DAUGHTER OF HER MISERY..."





"SURELY *SOMETHING* HAD TO BE DONE! THE GODS HAD GIVEN ME THIS CHANCE SO THAT I MIGHT REDEEM MYSELF! BUT *WHAT* COULD I, A WEAK OLD MAN, DO? IN MY HURRY, I HAD VISITED THIS ROOM OF ENCHANTMENT, AND AS THE AROMATIC VAPORS STUPIDIFIED MY SENSES, MY IMAGINATION WAS GIVEN ITS FREEDOM..."

"AH, THIS DREAM I WELL REMEMBER. I DREAMED THAT I WAS STRONG AND BRAVE. I DREAMED OF MY DAUGHTER'S SADNESS, OF HER YOUTH THAT WOULD WITHER AS THE AUTUMN LEAF, OF HER TEARS THAT FLOWED LIKE THE RIVER FROM JESER FILLED WITH OBSESSION..."



"IN MY DREAM I ARGUED IMPORTANTLY WITH HER MATE. I SAW THE VIOLENT EYES, THE LIPS CURLED IN WRATH, AND I WAS NOT AFRAID..."

"...FOR I HAD THE LION'S HEART! AND WHEN TO HIS SURPRISE, HE SAW HIS WORDS WERE USELESS, WE STRUGGLED MIGHTILY. . ."

"...AND HIS YOUTHFUL STRENGTH WAS PUT TO ITS GREATEST TEST? IN THE PURS THERE SUDDENLY APPEARED IN MY HAND A HUGE AXE WITH WHICH I STRUCK HIM A HEAVY BLOW. . ."



"I SHUDDER NOW TO RECALL HOW HE HAD FALLEN TO THE FLOOR, GUSHING RED, AND NOW I, IN MY ANGER, BROKE HIM A DOZEN MORE TIMES TILL THERE WAS BUT LITTLE LEFT OF HIM FOR ONE TO VIEW..."

"BEYOND DOUBT, HE WAS DEAD. AND MY HEART REFUSED TO KNOW THAT MY DAUGHTER'S SHACKLES HAD BEEN SEVERED, THAT SHE WAS FREE AS THE STARS THAT ONCE, AGAIN SPARKLED LIKE GEMS IN HER EYES! ALL THIS I HAD ACCOMPLISHED... AND I WAS A HERO!"





"WHEN I RETURNED FROM THE NEBULOUS WORLD, I WAS GREATLY AGITATED. TO BE SURE, IT WAS AN EXCELLENT DAY-DREAM, BUT SUDDENLY MY TWO GREAT SORROWS OCCURRED TO ME! AND I RECALLED THAT BEFORE THE DEATH OF MY WIFE, I HAD DREAMED HER DEAD!"



"AND I RECALLED THAT BEFORE THE DEATH OF MY ONLY SON... I HAD DREAMED HIM DEAD! COULD MY DREAMS POSSIBLY BE MORE THAN MORE FANCIES? COULD THE GREAT GODS WORK IN SUCH A MANNER TO ANSWER ME TO MY TRUE SELF? YOU CAN EASILY SEE MY EXCITEMENT! I HAD TO KNOW IF I WERE RIGHT! WITH MUCH HASTE I HURRIED TO MY DAUGHTER..."



"AND, LO! WHEN I ARRIVED, THERE WERE POLICEMEN AND CROWDS ALL BUSTLING AND EXCITED..."



MY DAUGHTER, YOU SAY! TELL ME WHAT HAS TRANSPIRED HERE?

MY HUSBAND HAS BEEN KILLED, MY FATHER! I DO NOT KNOW BY WHOM!

SURELY THEN, YOU SHOULD BE JOYFUL! NO ONE GRIEVES AT THE PASSING OF A WICKED SOUL... AND YOU ARE FREE! AND I HAVE AT LAST SUCCEEDED TO FIND THE SUCCESS AND IMPORTANCE THAT DESTINY HAD PLANNED FOR ME!



YES, MY FATHER!

AH, YES... THAT WAS MANY YEARS AGO. WHY AM I HERE, YOU ASK? WHERE IS THE SUCCESS AND IMPORTANCE I WAS TO RECEIVE, YOU ASK? (SIGH) NEVER SHALL I OBTAIN THAT GLORY!



IT IS ONLY HERE IN THIS PLACE THAT I SMOKE AND FIND CONSOLATION! YOU AND I KNOW THAT IT WAS MY DREAM THAT CAUSED MY DAUGHTER'S MAN TO DIE... YET THE POLICE WOULD NOT BELIEVE HER INNOCENT! SHE WAS PUT TO DEATH FOR HIS MURDER!



(SIGH) AH, WELL... IT IS TIME FOR ANOTHER DREAM... IS IT NOT?



THE END

HEH, HEH! GUESS *DAVE DAVE* WAS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO NEVER DO ANYTHING RIGHT! BUT WHO CAN SAY... MAYBE DREAMS *DO* COME TRUE, EH? BUT IF THAT'S SO, *MARILYN MONROE* IS GOING TO BE ONE BUSY GIRL! WELL, THE *OLD BITCH* IS NOW AMATING YOU WITH HER SCANDALOUS SLOP, SO, BYE!

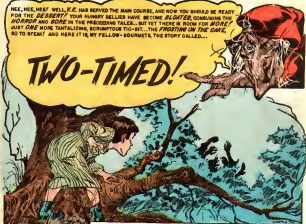




# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE, HEE! WELL, K.E. HAS SERVED THE MAIN COURSE, AND NOW YOU SHOULD BE READY FOR THE *DESSERT!* YOUR HUNGRY BELLIES HAVE BECOME *BLISTERED*, CONSUMING THE *HORROR* AND *GORE* IN THE PRECEDING TALES... BUT YET THERE IS ROOM FOR *MORE!* JUST *ONE* MORE TANTALIZING, SCRAMPTOUS TID-BIT... THE *FROSTING ON THE CAKE*, SO TO SPEAK! AND HERE IT IS, MY FELLOW- GOURMETS, THE STORY CALLED...

## TWO-TIMED!



IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER THE TURN OF THE CENTURY... 1900! THE WOODEN FRAME HOUSE NESTLED COZILY IN THE CENTER OF A MYRIAD OF TREES, QUIETLY SLEEPING UNDER THE WATCHFUL, WINKING STARS.

BUT INSIDE, ON HIS BED, TEN YEAR OLD DICKIE TOSSED RESTLESSLY, STRAINING TO HEAR THE FAMILIAR SOUND.

AND SUDDENLY HE HEARD IT





THE CLIP-CLOPPING OF THE HORSE AND SURELY STOPPED IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE... AND PUZZLED, HE HEARD IT START UP AGAIN AND MOVE OFF DOWN THE ROAD...



THAT'S FUNNY? I WAS SURE THAT WAS MOM AND DAD COMING HOME! WHO ELSE COULD IT HAVE BEEN?

THEIR HOUSE WAS DESOLATELY FAR FROM ANY NEIGHBOR, AND AS HE Huddled IN THOUGHT, HE HEARD UNFAMILIAR, ANGRY VOICES FROM OUTSIDE... HE COULDN'T MAKE OUT THE WORDS...



HOLY COW! SOMEBODY'S HAVING AN AWFUL ARGUMENT OUT THERE!

HIS YOUTHFUL CURIOSITY AWAKENED, HE LEFT HER BED, SNEAKED DOWNSTAIRS TO THE PORCH...



THEY'RE OVER THERE... IN THE TREES!

QUETLY, HE BRANDED THE SHADOWS OF THE TREES, MOVED CAUTIOUSLY TOWARD THE SHOUTING VOICES...



SOLLY! IT'S A MAN AND A WOMAN! AND THEY'RE FIGHTING!

IN THE DIMNESS HE WATCHED THE MAN VIOLENTLY BLUDGEONING THE WOMAN, TOO ENTRANCED BY THE HORROR HE WAS WITNESSING TO CRY OUT...



HE SAW THE WOMAN SLUMP TO THE GROUND, HER SCREAMS TURNING TO MUFFLED, ANGUISHED SOBS. AND THEN WITHOUT REASON, THE MAN SUDDENLY TURNED AND SAW THE BOY...



OH, SOLLY! OH, SOLLY, SOLLY! HE SEES ME! I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!

HE WANTED TO RUN... HE WANTED TO SCREAM FOR HELP, BUT HE COULDN'T! HIS FEET WERE ROOTED TO THE GROUND AS STRONGLY AS THE TREES SURROUNDING HIM! THE MAN WAS ON HIM IN AN INSTANT, HIS POWERFUL HANDS DIGGING GRUFFLY INTO HIS ARMS...



HELP!



THE MAN'S HANDS SHAPPED CRUELLY AROUND THE BOY'S NECK, EXERTING A TREMENDOUS PRESSURE THAT MADE HIS BLOOD SLAM THROUGH HIS HEAD, FORCED HIS EYES TO BULGE SPOTSEQUELY FROM THEIR SOCKETS!



AND AS SUDDENLY AS IT HAD STARTED, IT ENDED! THE MAN RELEASED HIS GRASP, AND THE BOY, MIND-BLOWN BLACKLY, CRUMPLED SLOWLY TO THE GROUND...



THE BOY REMAINED, SPRAWLED ON THE SOFT EARTH, A THROBBING PAIN IN HIS BRAIN, AND BEFORE HE DROPPED OFF INTO A BLACK VOID HE HEARD THE SHOT!



HE AWOKE TO FIND HIS PARENTS STANDING WORRIEDLY OVER HIM...



ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? (SOMETHING YOU SAID, WE CALLED CONSTABLE PIPER! WHAT HAPPENED?)

WHEN WE DIDN'T FIND YOU LIES, WE CALLED CONSTABLE PIPER! WHAT HAPPENED?

HE TOLD THEM AS BEST HE COULD, FRIGHTENED AND TEARFUL, AND THEY LISTENED. WHEN HE HAD FINISHED...



UNBELIEVABLE! NOT WITH THOSE BRUISES ON HIS NECK? AND THAT BLOOD? SWEET SMELL IT?

NOT WITH THOSE BRUISES ON HIS NECK? AND THAT BLOOD? SWEET SMELL IT?

YES! THE GROUND IS ALL SCORCHED! BUT WHAT? THERE'S NOT A TRACE OF ANYTHING! SOMETHING WAS BURNED HERE!



THIS CERTAINLY IS STRANGE! I HOPE YOU FIND THE MAN WHO DID THIS! OUR BOY WAS ALMOST KILLED!



OH, WE'LL FIND HIM, MA'AM! I'LL START AN INVESTIGATION RIGHT AWAY!



HEE, HEE! WELL, CONSTABLE PHYPE DID INVESTIGATE, BUT OF COURSE, HE WAS NEVERABLE TO *SOOLVE* THE STRANGE MYSTERY. GRADUALLY IT WAS FORGOTTEN, AND TOMMY GREW UP TO MARRY A STIRKIN' LITTLE *FIND-FURER* WHO MADE HIM MISERABLE BY KEEPING A LOVER ON THE SIDE!



ONE NIGHT WHEN HIS WIFE THOUGHT HE WOULD BE WORKING LATE...

SURE I WANT TO GET RID OF MY HUSBAND, HONEY! BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO GET ME THE GUN!

WHY THAT CREEPY LITTLE SHE WANTS TO *KILL* ME!



BUT HIS OWN MURDER WAS ONE THING HE WOULD NEVER ALLOW. SECRETLY HE MADE HIS OWN PLANS TO KILL HER *FIRST*!

LET'S SEE... I'VE LEAVE HOUSE 8:00, RETURN TO HOUSE! 8:00, SET ALL THINGS IN READINESS... HIM... YES... YES, I'M ALL SET!



A FEW DAYS LATER HE LEFT ON "AN IMPORTANT BUSINESS TRIP" TO THE CITY...

I'LL BE HOME IN A FEW DAYS, DARLING! TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF!

8-000-OYE, DEAN! I'LL MISS YOU!



AS SOON AS HE WAS OUT OF SIGHT, HE HID THE BUSHY IN A CLUMP OF TREES AND DOUBLED BACK TO THE HOUSE JUST IN TIME TO SEE HIS WIFE MEET HER LOVER!

HE'S GONE, SWEETHEART! ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

TERRIFIC! O'MON, LET'S GO FOR A DRIVE! WE HAVE PLANS TO MAKE, REMEMBER?



HE WATCHED AS THEY DAUGHBLED TOGETHER IN THE BUSHY, WAITED TILL THEY HAD DRIVEN OUT OF SIGHT BEFORE HE ENTERED THE HOUSE AND MADE HIS WAY TO THE CELLAR...

THEY PROBABLY WON'T BE BACK FOR A WHILE, BUT I CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES! WHERE'S THAT SHOVEL?



HE TOOK A SHOVEL, A LEAD PIPE AND A CAN OF KEROSENE FROM THE CELLAR, BROUGHT THEM OUTSIDE AND STASHED THEM DEEP IN THE TREES...

THERE! EVERYTHING'S READY! AS LONG AS NOTHING HAPPENS TO THROW ME OFF SCHEDULE, I'M SAFE! WELL, CAN'T DO ANYTHING NOW EXCEPT WAIT!





SEVERAL HOURS PASSED BEFORE HE HEARD THE BUGGY FULL TO A STOP...



ARE THEY'RE BACK?  
LOOK AT HER KISS  
HIM GOOD-NIGHT!

MOMENTS LATER, THE BUGGY RATTLED AWAY AND HIS WIFE BEGAN THE WALK TO THE HOUSE. IT WAS THEN HE STEPPED FROM THE TREES TO CONFRONT HER...



TOM?  
YES, IT'S ME, YOU DIRTY DOUBLE-CROSSER!



WHA...? WHAT  
DO YOU MEANT  
S... I THOUGHT

I KNOW WHAT YOU  
THOUGHT! YOU  
THOUGHT I'D STILL  
BE IN THE GIFT!



NO... NO, OF COURSE NOT!  
I... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?  
LET GO OF ME!

NOT THIS TIME! I'M  
GOING TO MAKE YOU  
PAY FOR WHAT YOU'VE  
DONE!



HE GRABBED HER, SQUIRMING AND KICKING, BACK THROUGH THE TREES TO WHERE HE HAD BROUGHT THE IMPLEMENTS HE NEEDED TO COMPLETE HIS PLAN...

YOU FILTHY FIE!  
GET YOUR DIRTY  
HANDS...

OWH!

SHE SLUMPED TO THE GROUND! HE SNATCHES UP THE LEAD PIPE, AND IN A DESPERATE FURY POUNDED AND BEAT HER...



GREAT! LYING  
TWO-TIMER!

SUDDENLY, WITHOUT REASON, HE TURNED! THERE IN THE DARKNESS HE SAW A BOLT-EYES WIDE WITH FRIGHT, IMMOBILE WITH HORROR... WATCHING!



GREAT BLAZE! THE KID SAW EVERYTHING!



IN AN INSTANT HE WAS UPON THE BOY! HIS HANDS SNAPPED CRUELTY AROUND THE BOY'S NECK, EXERTING A TREMENDOUS PRESSURE THAT MADE THE BLOOD SLAM THROUGH THE YOUNGESTER'S HEAD, FORCED THE EYES TO BULGE GROTESQUELY FROM THEIR SOCKETS...



HIS GRASP RELAXED AND THE BOY SLUMPED SLOWLY TO THE GROUND...

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO WHEN I SAW THIS HAPPEN... THERE WAS A SHOT! THAT MEANS...



SWIFTLY, HE RUSHED TO HIS WIFE, SEARCHED HER POCKETS UNTIL...

AH! I'VE FOUND IT! THE GUN! NOW SHE CAN'T SHOOT ME! HA HA! HA HA HA HA HA!



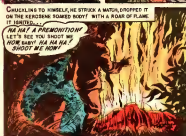
HE STUMBLED TO THE KEROSENE, SPILLED IT OVER THE INERT FORM OF HIS WIFE, GLDATING...



A PREMONITION, THAT'S WHAT IT WAS! AND IT SAVED MY LIFE!

CHUCKLING TO HIMSELF, HE STRUCK A MATCH, DROPPED IT ON THE KEROSENE SOAKED BODY! WITH A ROAR OF FLAME IT IGNITED...

HA HA! A PREMONITION! LET'S SEE YOU SHOOT ME NOW BABY! HA HA HA! SHOOT ME NOW!



THEN SUDDENLY, A SUMMER OF REMEMBRANCE AND RECOGNITION FLASHED ACROSS THE MAN'S FACE! HE STOPPED. HIS FINGERS LESSENER THEIR GRIP!



GOOD LORD! I RECOGNIZE WHAT HE'S ME WHEN I WAS A BOY! HE'S ME FIFTEEN YEARS AGO!





HE STAGGERED, THE REFLEXES BLOSHING OVER HIM, AND THEN HE FELL... ON HIS BURNING WIFE'S BODY!

CONSTABLE PHIFE RACED TO THE BLAZING PYRE, FLEW WILDLY WITH HIS COAT TO SMOTHER THE FLAMES, TO FULL THE BODIES ARISE!



FINALLY THE FLAMES WERE OUT AND THE CONSTABLE SAT CROUCHING BY THE CHARRED, DYING MAN...

LEASTWISE, I KNOW NOW WHO WE ALL SMELLED SMOKE FIFTEEN YEARS AGO! ALWAYS *FELT* THERE WAS SOME THING MIGHTY CURIOUS 'BOUT THAT STORY YOU TOLD US THEN!

I NEVER WAS *CERTAIN*, MIND YOU, AND THROUGH THE YEARS I KINDA FORGOT ABOUT IT... UNTIL TONIGHT! SO I FIGURED I'D BEST GET OVER HERE... JUST TO MAKE SURE!



"SORRY I COULDN'T GET HERE A BIT SOONER, BOY. MAYBE NONE O' THIS WOULD'VE HAPPENED IF I HAD!"



BUT... (GASP) I DON'T KNOW... EITHER UNTIL TONIGHT (GASP) NOW... HOW DID YOU...?

WELL... IT ALL STARTED WITH A SCRAP OF PAPER! JUST A SCRAP THAT I HAPPENED TO FIND BY YOUR BODY THAT NIGHT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO! IT GOT ME TO WONDERING... BECAUSE IT HAD TODAY'S DATE ON IT!



HEE, HEE? DON'T ASK *ME*! YOU FIGURE IT OUT! POOR TOM THOUGHT HE COULD CHANGE THE COURSE OF *DESTINY* BUT HE FOUND OUT THE HARD WAY THAT YOU CAN'T FOOL THE PICKLE FINGER OF FATE! ANYWAY, UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN IN MY HAD, THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THIS IS THE OLD WITCH SAYING 'BYE, DON'T FORGET TO KEEP YOUR SPIRITS UP!



THE  
END





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*Charles Atlas*

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Afraid to Stand?  
Nervous?  
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# THE VAULT OF



10¢

# HORROR

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH









# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH? WELL, HERE WE GO AGAIN! IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER GRUESOME WHIRLWIND OF TERROR! AH, YES! THE  
SAPIDISTIC EVIL TRAPPED IN THE VOLUMINOUS COMPINES OF *THE VAULT* HAVE ONCE AGAIN BEEN UNLEASHED TO  
PLAGUE AND MYSTIFY YOU! THE AWESOME MAGNITUDE OF THE POWERS OF DARKNESS WILL, ONCE MORE... OH!  
PARDON ME FOR BEING SO RUDE! I NEGLECTED TO INTRODUCE MY COMPANION! HEH, HEH? FRIENDS, I WANT YOU TO  
MEET DRUSILLA... HOSTESS OF THE VAULT OF HORROR! YOU MAY RECALL SEEING HER BEFORE... SHE'S BEEN  
GLIDING IN AND OUT OF THIS PLACE FOR SOME TIME! I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE HER STAND AROUND  
LOOKING BEAUTIFUL! HEH, HEH! ANYWAY... LET'S GET ON WITH THE HAIR-RAISER CALLED...

## SURPRISE PARTY!





THE CAR MOVED THROUGH THE DESERTED, RAINY STREETS UNTIL ITS GOAL WAS SIGHTED AND IT DREW AHEAD OF THE TOWN'S ONLY HOTEL. THE DRIVER SHUT THE IGNITION AND LEANED BACK. HE SURVEYED THE STREET... THE HOTEL...



AH HOUR LATER HE WAS PACING HIS ROOM LIKE A CAGED ANIMAL...



THE PEOPLE MUST DO *SOME THING* FOR EXCITEMENT! MAYBE THE DESK-CLERK WILL HAVE AN IDEA! I CAN'T JUST STARE AT THESE WALLS ALL EVENING!



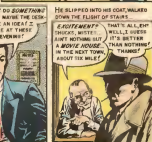
HE SLIPPED INTO HIS COAT, WALKED DOWN THE FLIGHT OF STAIRS...



HE DROVE AWAY FROM THE TOWN, HEADED OUT ON THE MAIN ROAD TOWARD DALTON'S CORNERS, SIX MILES DISTANT...



WITH AN EFFORT HE STEPPED FROM THE CAR, HUNCHING HIS SHOULDERS AGAINST THE RAIN. HE LIFTED A SUIT-CASE AND BROUGHT IT INTO THE SLEEPING HOTEL, PLACED IT ON THE FLOOR BEFORE THE DESK-CLERK.



THE CAR KRIED THROUGH THE DOWNGRADE FOR MANY MINUTES UNTIL ITS HEADLIGHTS PICKED OUT AN OBJECT IN THE ROAD AHEAD. JERRY ADAMS BRAKED THE CAR TO A STOP, READ THE WORD EMBLAZONED ON THE SIGN...





HE SLAMMED THE CAR INTO GEAR, TURNED ONTO THE SIDE ROAD. HE WENT SLOWLY, EASING THE CAR THROUGH THE CLUSTERS OF BRANCHES THAT DRAPED FROM OVERHANGING TREES AND SCRAPPED AGAINST THE WINDOWS.



THE BUTTERED, MUDDY ROAD WOUND ENDLESSLY UPWARD THROUGH DENSE FOX BARKS, THICK FOLIAGE. AND AS HE PROGRESSED, JERRY FOUND THE ROAD NARROWING, THE TREES AND LEAVES CROWDING IN ON BOTH SIDES.



HE STOPPED THE CAR. ANGRILY HE DREW A MAP FROM THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT AND PORED OVER IT.

FOR CRYIN' OUT *LOUD*! THIS ROAD ISN'T EVEN ON THE MAP! WHAT A MESS!



THE ROAD'S TOO NARROW TO TURN AROUND HERE! AND I CAN'T SEE WELL ENOUGH IN THIS RAIN TO BACK ALL THE WAY OUT! I'LL JUST HAVE TO GO A BIT FURTHER AND TRUST TO LUCK!



ONCE AGAIN HE STEERED THE CAR FORWARD... ONLY TO STOP AGAIN FIFTY YARDS LATER.

AW! I THOUGHT I SAW A LIGHT THROUGH THE TREES! AND THERE'S AN ENTRANCE GATE RIGHT OVER THERE! CAN HARDLY SEE IT!



THE CAR CAUTIOUSLY MOVED THROUGH THE ANCIENT GATE...UP THE ESTATE ROAD, OVERGROWN WITH WEEDS, THAT FINALLY FETTERED OUT AND DISSOLVED INTO THE UNDERGROWTH.

LOOKS LIKE THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE! I'LL HAVE TO *HOP* IT THE REST OF THE WAY, I GUESS!



GREATLY ANNOYED, HE SWITCHED OFF THE IGNITION AND STEPPED FROM THE CAR. HE BUTTERED HIS COAT AGAINST THE RAIN AND STARTED TOWARD THE HOUSE.

MISERABLE WEATHER! AT LEAST I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET DIRECTIONS AT THAT HOUSE! PLENTY OF *LIGHTS* ON!





HE STRUGGLED NEARER TO THE HOUSE, FEELING THE WETNESS SEEP THROUGH HIS CLOTHES...



ONLY A LITTLE FURTHER! SAY! IS THAT MUSIC I HEAR?

HE DREW CLOSE TO THE HOUSE AND PEERED THROUGH THE WINDOW...



LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A PARTY GOING ON... A COSTUME BALL? WELL! I'M IN LUCK!

RELIEVED, HE STRODE TO THE FRONT DOOR AND RAPPED UPON IT VIOLENTLY. THE DOOR OPENED, SPILLING LIGHT, MUSIC AND WARMTH UPON HIM...



GOOD EVENING? I... I'M LOST! I THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE WERE...

WOULD YOU STEP IN, SIR?

HE ENTERED. HE STOOD IN THE ENTRANCE HALL, HIS WET CLOTHES DRIPPING, FORMING LITTLE PUDDLES ON THE MARBLE FLOORING. THE BUTLER DISAPPEARED AMONG THE PEOPLE IN THE CROWDED BALLROOM... AND MOMENTARILY, A LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN DETACHED HERSELF FROM THEM AND GLIDED SPACIOUSLY TOWARD HIM...



HOW DO YOU DO, SIR? SO NICE OF YOU TO COME!

EH? OH... YES! I'M SORRY TO INTRUDE BUT...

IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT! ALFRED, TAKE THE GENTLEMAN'S COAT!



OH, NO, PLEASE! I ONLY WANT TO GET DIRECTIONS! REALLY, IT'S NOT NECESSARY TO...

HE STOPPED TALKING. WASN'T THIS JUST WHAT HE HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR? SOMETHING *EXCITING* TO WILE AWAY THE EVENING? CERTAINLY! WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN A PARTY... WITH WOMEN AND LIQUOR...



OR... WELL, IF YOU *INSIST*! HERE, ALFRED... MY COAT!

THE GIRL LED HIM INTO THE GRAND BALLROOM AND HE WAS STUNNED BY ITS ELEGANCE. FLEETINGS, HE HUMPHED GLITTERING CANDELABRAS, EXQUISITE BROCADE DRAPERIES... THEY STOPPED BY THE PORCH BOWL AND HE WATCHED HER DELICATELY FILL A GLASS...



WELL! HA, HA! ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS, A LITTLE MIP CERTAINLY LOOKS GOOD!

YES...



HE TOOK THE PROSPERED GLASS AND THANKED HER. AS HE SIPPED THE DRINK, HIS GAZE PASSED AMONG THE GUESTS. HE NOTED WITH DISPLEASURE THAT EVERYONE SEEMED TO BE HAVING A PERFECTLY *DOLL* EVENING.



"NOW?" BY THEIR EXPRESSIONS, YOU THINK THEY'D ALL BEEN EATING SOUL LEMONS? MAYBE I HISSID THE BOAT THIS TIME?

HE TURNED BACK TO THE GIRL, ONLY TO FIND SHE WASN'T THERE! HIS EYES FOUND HER ACROSS THE ROOM, SOLIDLY STANDING BESIDE A YOUNG MAN...



HHMM... MY LADY FRIEND LOOKS BORED TO DEATH! MAYBE IT'S BETTER TO GO OVER AND GIVE HER SOME OF THE OLD ADAMS CHARM! SHE'S A *REAL DOLL*!

CASUALLY, HE STRAIGHTENED HIS TIE AND MADE HIS WAY ACROSS THE ROOM.

I BEE YOUR PARDON... MAY I HAVE THE HONOR OF DANCING WITH YOU?

WHY... OF COURSE... IF YOU WISH?



TO THE STRAINS OF A WALTZ, THEY SLIDED ROUND THE ROOM. JERRY ADAMS WAS AMAZED...

WHY... I'VE NEVER DANCED WITH SUCH A WONDERFUL PARTNER! YOU'RE SO... SO LIGHT AND GRACEFUL!

THANK YOU



INDEED, HE COULD BARELY SENSE HER BACK BENEATH HIS FINGERS, SO SOFT AND PLIABLE DID SHE SEEM.

THIS HOUSE IS EXTREMELY BEAUTIFUL! IT MUST BE A GREAT PLEASURE TO LIVE IN IT!

YES, IT IS NICE.



HE WONDERED, AS THEY WHIRLED ROUND AND ROUND, IF SHE WAS ALWAYS SO QUIET. SHE WASN'T ANGRY... JUST... *DISINTERESTED*. HE THOUGHT, IT WOULD TAKE TIME...

THIS IS A WONDERFUL PARTY! WHAT... ER... WHAT TIME DO YOU SUPPOSE IT WILL END?

THE SAME TIME IT ALWAYS ENDS... AT MIDNIGHT!



WHAT A BUNCH OF DEAD-BEATS! THESE HICKS CERTAINLY NEVER KNEW HOW TO ENJOY THEMSELVES, WHAT WITH THEIR STRICT MORALS AND PRIM WAYS OF LIVING. STILL... HE'D HEARD A LOT ABOUT COUNTRY GIRLS...





THEY CONTINUED DANCING, AND HE WONDERED IF IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO REMAIN AT THE HOTEL AND GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP. BUT THEN HIS MANLY INSTINCTS MADE HIM TRY AGAIN TO BREAK THROUGH THIS GIRL'S SERENITY—HER CALM, ALMOST DETACHMENT.

YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE ME FOR NOT HAVING A COSTUME LIKE EVERYONE ELSE. I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND. I...

I UNDERSTAND. STAND.



HE WAS STYFLED, WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THIS GIRL, ANYWAY? LITTLE BY LITTLE HE BECAME ANNOYED.

SAY, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?



NO.

OH.



IT'S JUST THAT I'M A STRANGER IN TOWN... JUST ARRIVED THIS EVENING! YOU SEE, I INHERITED SOME PROPERTY HEREABOUTS! I HAVE TO MEET SOME LAWYER IN THE MORNING TO...

HOW NICE.



ER... WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO REST? THIS DANCING CAN BE *FATIGUE*, HER... CAN'T IT? SHALL WE SIT THIS ONE OUT?

IF YOU WISH!



THEY SAT, STIFFLY, UNCONCERNEDLY, SHE STARED AT THE MILLING DANCERS, SEEMINGLY UNMOVED BY THEIR PRESENCE. HE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, HAD A CHANCE TO STUDY THE GUESTS CLOSELY. THERE WAS THE RUMBLE OF MANY VOICES... YET HE COULD SPOT NO ONE ACTUALLY TALKING.



AND THEN THE MUSIC SETTLED INTO HIS BRAIN... AND HE REALIZED THE ORCHESTRA HAD BEEN PLAYING THE *SAME WALTZ OVER AND OVER*, UNCEASINGLY, ALL EVENING?

I, I, ER, HESITATE TO SAY THIS... BUT ISN'T THE MUSIC GETTING *MONOTONOUS*? I MEAN, THEY PLAY THE *SAME TUNE*...

YES, THAT IS THE SONG THEY WERE PLAYING WHEN IT HAPPENED!





HE WAS BECOMING MORE THAN A LITTLE ANNOYED BY THIS GIRL'S BEHAVIOR! EVEN THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE PARTY ITSELF WAS MORE LIKE A FUNERAL THAN A BAY EVENT! HE LOOKED AT HIS WATCH...TEN MINUTES TO TWELVE!



YOU SAID THE ORCHESTRA IS PLAYING THE SAME SONG THEY PLAYED WHEN IT WHEN IT HAPPENED? WHEN WHAT HAPPENED?

WHY...THE FIRE, OF COURSE!



WHAT FIRE? OH, PLEASE EXCUSE ME! MY FIANCE IS COMING! I FEAR I HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM HIM TOO LONG!



SIR, I SHOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE MY FIANCE, MR. ROGER WERTHAM! ROGER, THIS IS... OH, I'M SORRY, SIR! I DO NOT KNOW YOUR NAME!



MY NAME? OH, HOW STUPID OF ME! NOT TO MENTION IT! MY NAME IS ADAMS! JERRY ADAMS!





AT THE MENTION OF HIS NAME, EVERYTHING STOPPED! THE DANCING, THE MUSIC, THE TALKING... EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE BECAME MOTIONLESS! ATTENTION WAS RIVETED UPON HIM... AND THE SILENCE WAS *DEATHLY*.



A GREAT RUSTLING AND MUMBLING ERUPTED FROM THE SURROUNDING PEOPLE, THE GIRLS EYES *GLEAMED*



I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN! THIS PARTY WAS MY *ENGAGEMENT PARTY*... BACK IN *1884*? I HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN *TWO* SUITORS... AND I CHOSE *JONES*? BUT THE MAN WHOM I REFUSED... WAS VERY *JEALOUS*!



EVERY YEAR SINCE THEN WE COME BACK TO *RE-ENACT* THE EVENTS OF THAT EVENING! FOR WE CANNOT GO TO A PEACEFUL REST UNTIL OUR DEATHS HAVE BEEN *AVENGED*!



YOU SEE... THE JEALOUS SUITOR WHO CAUSED OUR DEATH WAS NAMED *ADAMS*... YOUR ANCESTOR, WHOSE PROPERTY YOU WERE TO INHERIT! AND IN HIS PLACE... WE MUST mete OUT *JUSTICE*... TO YOU!



YOU SEE... THE JEALOUS SUITOR WHO CAUSED OUR DEATH WAS NAMED *ADAMS*... YOUR ANCESTOR, WHOSE PROPERTY YOU WERE TO INHERIT! AND IN HIS PLACE... WE MUST mete OUT *JUSTICE*... TO YOU!



HEN, HEN? IF ADAMS KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE A *NECK-TIE PARTY*, HE WOULD'VE STOOD IN *RED*! BUT AS IT WAS, HIS *APPLE* GOT A GOOD BREAK, YOU KNOW *ADAMS APPLE*? HEN! WELL... STAY TUNED TO THIS SAME CHANNEL, THE *CRYPT-KEEPER* IS NEXT IN VIEW! HENHEN!





# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH? GREETINGS, SNOOLES? AH, THAT'S THE WAY... JUST SHOVE THE  
BOOGIES AWAY AND MAKE YOURSELVES MISERABLE HERE IN *THE CRYPT*, WHILE  
THIS COLD-BLOODED CHARACTER, YOUR CANTANKEROUS *CRYPT-KEEPER*  
READIES A SPINE-SPLITTING SAGA FROM MY FOUL FILES IN *THE CRYPT OF  
TERROR*? THIS MISERABLE MESS OF MORBIDITY IS THE NIGHTMARE OF A  
DELIRIOUS DREAMER WHO, POOR DEVIL, KEPT LOSING HIS HEAD OVER THE  
SAME WOMAN! I CALL THIS DOLOROUS DIARY OF HEART-RENDING  
CONFUSION... TOLD BY JMOZ IN HIS OWN WORDS...

## CHOP TALK!





"THE PEOPLE OF BERLIN HAD DESERTED THE PARTY THAT  
 NEW DECEMBER DAY. THE LEAFLESS, SLEEPING TREES...  
 THE FORSAKEN BIRD-NESTS... THE HARD, FROZEN EARTH  
 LAYING LIKE A DEAD WOMAN AWAITING A SNOWY SHROUD.  
 ALL GAVE ANNA AND I THE IMPACT FOR A REMEDY."

"THIS IS GOODBYE, ANNA? I MEAN IT THIS TIME,  
 THEN LET US HAVE A  
**FAREWELL KISS!**"

"EMIL! I DON'T WANT TO  
 SEE YOU AGAIN!"



"I'D HAD THIS BUSINESS BEFORE WITH ANNA. SHE'D SAY  
 WE WERE THROUGH... BUT THE NEXT DAY SHE'D COME  
 CRAWLING BACK TO ME! THIS TIME, HOWEVER, THERE WAS  
 A COLDNESS, A **FINALITY** IN HER VOICE... THAT I FOUND  
 HARD TO BELIEVE."

"ANNA, YOU **DON'T** MEAN  
 IT! YOU'LL COME **BACK**  
 TO ME... LIKE **ALWAYS!**"

"NO, EMIL! I'M GOING TO TELL  
 MY HUSBAND **EVERYTHING!**  
 I'M GOING TO SEE HIS  
 FORGIVENESS!" HE **LOVES**  
 ME!"



"DON'T TALK LIKE  
 A FOOL! YOU COULD  
 NEVER GIVE ME  
 UP! YOU... **OW!**"

"IT'S OVER!  
 CAN'T YOU  
 UNDERSTAND?  
 WE'RE  
 THROUGH!"



"I DON'T KNOW WHY OR HOW I  
 SUDDENLY BECAME SO ENRAGED!  
 BEFORE I REALIZED WHAT I WAS  
 DOING, I GRABBED THE SCARF-END  
 AND DREW THEM TIGHTLY ABOUT  
 HER THROAT..."

"ALL RIGHT, ANNA... THEN IT'S  
**OVER!**"



"A MOMENT LATER SHE SLUMPED TO  
 THE GROUND... AND STILL I TWISTED  
 THE SCARF TIGHTER EVEN THOUGH I  
 HEARD THE HEAVY POUNDING OF FEET  
 BEHIND ME..."



"HUGE, POWERFUL HANDS YANKED ME AWAY FROM THE  
 LIMP BODY AND SPUN ME AROUND! A GREAT FIST SLAMMED  
 AGAINST MY HEAD WITH THE FORCE OF A SLEDGE-  
 HAMMER!"

"WHAT HAVE YOU **DONE** TO  
 ME? WHAT HAVE YOU **DONE**  
 TO MY WIFE?"



"DIMLY, I SAW THE MAN CRADLE ANNA IN HIS ENORMOUS  
 ARMS. VAGUELY, I REALIZED THAT HE WAS **MY FATHER**...  
 ANNA'S HUSBAND? THROUGH THE THROBBING ACHE IN  
 MY HEAD, I HEARD HER MOURNFUL SOBS... AND SLOWLY,  
 PAINFULLY, I TRIED TO CRAWL AWAY..."

"ANNA... **FORGIVE** ME, ANNA!  
 WHERE HAVE I **FAILED**  
 YOU?"





"I HAD HARDLY GONE FIFTEEN FEET WHEN THE GREAT BRUTE WAS UPON ME, PULLING ME UP AS IF I WERE A MAD-DOLL! I COULD SEE THE HATE DEEP IN HIS TEAR-REDDED EYES... THE LIVID SCAR ON HIS CHIN."

"I COULD KILL YOU, MISTER! I COULD SNAP YOUR FILTHY NECK WITH ONE HAND... BUT THERE WILL BE A *WOTSE* WAY... I *PROMISE* YOU!"

"YOU... YOU SHOULD THANK ME! SHE... SHE WAS *NO GOOD*!"



"HEINRICH SLAMMED HIS CALLoused PAW AGAINST MY MOUTH! MY LIFE BECAME WARM AND SWOLLEN ALMOST AT ONCE, AND I COULD FEEL WARM BLOOD FROM WHERE THEY WERE TORN, TRICKLING DOWN MY CHIN."

"*LOAR!*" MY ANNA IS DEAD! I HAVE NOTHING TO LIVE FOR NOW... NOTHING BUT TO SEE YOU *SUFFER AND DIE!*"



"I CAN HARDLY RECALL THE FRIGHTFUL FANTASY OF MY TRIAL. HEINRICH WAS THERE, STARING AT ME! I TRIED NOT TO LOOK AT HIM, BUT I FELT HIS SIMULDERING EYES ON ME EVERY ASSHOLING MOMENT."



"I WAS FILLED WITH RELIEF WHEN I AT LAST RECEIVED MY SENTENCE..."

"...AND ON A DAY CONVENIENT TO THE HEAD WARDEN, YOU, EMIL VOIGT, WILL BE PUT TO DEATH..."



"IN MY CELL, I THOUGHT OF MY DEATH AND IT SEEMED UNREAL... IT COULD NEVER HAPPEN TO *ME*! THEN, ONE DAY..."

"EMIL VOIGT? YOU HAVE A *VISIT* FOR."



"I RECOGNIZED HIM AT ONCE BY THE BIG SCAR ON HIS CHIN, AND THOSE HATE-FILLED EYES THAT GLARED THROUGH THE SLITS IN HIS EXECUTIONER'S MASK."

"HEINRICH! YOU... YOU ARE THE EXECUTIONER!"

"ANNA DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT MY JOB, EN? BUT DON'T TREMBLE SO! YOUR TIME HAS NOT COME... *YET*!"



"I HAVE TO EXECUTE A MAN IN A LITTLE WHILE, SO I CAN ONLY STAY A FEW MINUTES! HAVE YOU EVER *SEEN* AN EXECUTION, VOIGT? LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT *GOES*!"

"NO... NO, I DON'T *WANT* TO HEAR! GO *AWAY*!"





"MENTALLY, I TRIED TO DEAFEN MYSELF, BUT HIS WORDS BURST INTO MY BRAIN. I FOUGHT NOT TO LOOK, YET I COULD NOT TEAR MY EYES FROM THE BLENNING, RAZORED ARE..."

I SPEND THE NIGHT BEFORE, HONING MY AXE SO IT WILL BE OVER QUICKLY FOR THE OOMED MAN... **UNLESS IT HAPPENS TO BE SOMEONE I DON'T LIKE!** THEN I AM HAPPY TO WASTE THREE OR FOUR STROKES TO PROLONG THE AGONY!



"I COVERED MY EARS... AND STILL I HEARD."

...FIRST I GO TO MY VICTIM'S CELL, AND IN MY MOST SOMBER VOICE, I CALL HIM! SOMETIMES HE WILL WALK WITH ME... OTHER TIMES HE WILL BE DRAGGED, CLAWING AND SCREAMING!



...AND AS YOUR HEAD TUMBLER INTO THE WAITING PASKET, BEFORE THE DARKNESS CLOSED IN, YOU'LL SEE YOUR NECK... BRISTLY RAW FLESH, SPLINTERED BONE, THE RED BLOOD GUSHING OUT...!

STOP IT! STOP IT!



IT IS SOMETHING FOR YOU TO **THOKE** ABOUT, VOIST! WHEN YOUR TIME COMES, YOU'LL KNOW I'LL ONLY BE THINKING OF **JANNA**, AND HOW **LOVELY** I AM, AND HOW GOOD IT WILL BE TO **JOIN** HER... AFTER I HAVE FINISHED WITH YOU!



"I FELL UPON MY FUNK IN A COMA-LIKE SLEEP, EXHAUSTED BY THE HORRENDOUS EXPERIENCE TO WHICH NEIGHBOR HAD SUBJECTED ME..."



"I DID NOT KNOW HOW LONG I SLEPT, BUT SUDDENLY, THROUGH THE MIST OF MY UNCONSCIOUS, I HEARD HIS VOICE CALLING ME. HE CALLED AGAIN, LOUDER..."

COME, ENIL VOIST!

IS IT (GASP) NOW?



"MY INSIDES GUTTERED LIKE COLD JELLY, AND MY LEGS WERE RUBBERY BENEATH ME, BUT I WAS PERCELY DETERMINED NOT TO SHOW HIM MY FEAR, NOT TILL I Laid EYES ON THE BLOODSTAINED BLOCK... NOT TILL THEN DID I WEAKEN."

NOT NO! PLEASE!

TO THE BLOCK, ENIL VOIST!





"HEINRICH BRUSQUELY SHOVELED ME DOWN ON MY KNEES AND ADJUSTED MY HEAD ON THE BLOCK! I GLANCED UP AND SAW THE MIGHTY SWELLING OF HIS BICEPS AS HE RAISED THE AXE! IT GLINTED IN THE SUNLIGHT."



"IT WAS DULL, THAT BLADE, AND THE BLOW SAVED AGAIN! I COULD HEAR HIM LAUGH, THROUGH MY ASORT, AS HE BROUGHT THE AXE DOWN AGAIN AND AGAIN... AND I WOKE UP FROM THE SOUND OF MY OWN SCREAMS!"

"OOOH... I'VE... I'VE  
BEN DREAMING?"



"I WAS FRIGHTENED, THE NIGHT-  
MARE HAD CLEARLY FORTOLD THE  
HORRORS I WOULD ENDURE AT  
HEINRICH'S HANDS, AND I WAS POS-  
SESSED WITH DREAD..."



"HAD I KNOWN I WOULD *DREAM*  
AGAIN, I WOULD NEVER HAVE  
*SLEPT* THAT NIGHT..."

"COME, EVIL VOICE!"



"HE SEIZED MY CHAINS AND DRAGGED  
ME, STRUGGLING AND SCREAMING,  
THROUGH THE CORRIDOR OF THE  
DAMNED..."



"I RANTED AND KICKED EVERY STEP OF THE WAY! TWO  
ASSISTANTS WERE NEEDED TO HOLD MY HEAD DOWN TO  
THE CHOPPING BLOCK, EVEN *AFTER* THE FIRST BLOW  
OF THE DULL BLADE..."



"AGAIN I AWOKE SCREAMING! SWEAT BEADED MY SKIN...  
AND THE BACK OF MY NECK ACHED! TREMBLING, I TRIED  
TO LIGHT A CIGARETTE..."

"A DREAM? A BLASTED  
*DREAM*? IT'S DRIVING  
ME CRAZY! WHY  
DON'T THEY SET IT  
OVER WITH?"





"THE DAYS AND NIGHTS PASSED ENDLESSLY IN A WHIRL OF HORRIFYING NIGHTMARES. AND THOUGH I FOUGHT TO STAY AWAKE, MY WAKING THOUGHTS OFFERED NO RELIEF."



"I LURED IN AN HYSTERICAL DELIRIUM, HARDLY KNOWING WHEN I WAS CONSCIOUS, BEING AWARE ONLY OF HOW I WAS LED TO THE BLOCK TIME AND AGAIN! I WAS TOO MUMS TO FEEL, FEAR. I COULD ONLY FEEL THE TERRIBLE BLOWS, THE CRUSHING OF BONES, THE CHOCK OF THE AXE IN MY FLESH."



"INSIDE I ACHED FROM THE TORMENTS OF MY REPEATED DREAMS. I LONGED FOR DEATH... SWEET UNKNOWN, UNFEELING DEATH..."



"I PRAYED FOR DEATH! I WELCOMED IT WITH OPEN ARMS FOR I KNEW IT WAS THE ONLY MEANS OF MY ESCAPING THIS TORTURE..."



"AND THEN AT LAST, IT WAS TIME...  
COME, FILL YOURS! AT LAST!  
IT WILL BE OVER SOON!"



"I WALKED TO DEATH WITH A SMILE. I WAS HAPPY KNOWING THIS WAS THE REAL THING! HEINRICH SAW MY JOY, AND HE SCORCHED AT ME IN SPEECHLESS FURY..."

"YOU LOSE, HEINRICH! YOU CAN'T HURT ME ANYMORE! IN A FEW MOMENTS, I'LL BE FREE OF YOU!"



"IT WAS SOMETHING I HAD NOT COUNTED ON OR HOPED FOR... HEINRICH LOST HIS TEMPER! HE BROUGHT THE GREAT AXE DOWN WITH ALL HIS MIGHT! ONE GACK, DRAFF PAIN... AND IT WAS OVER!"





"DO YOU THINK ONE DOES NOT KNOW WHEN HE HAS  
CROSSED THE BARRIER? I KNEW. I KNEW HEINRICH  
LIFTED MY HEAD FROM THE BASKET, AND THAT HE WAS  
INFURIATED BECAUSE HE COULD HURT ME NO MORE."

IT WAS TOO EASY, VOIST?  
TOO EASY, DO YOU HEAR?



"...AND THEN I HEARD THE VOICE, THE SAME VOICE, THE  
TERRIBLE, HAUNTING VOICE I HAD HEARD SO OFTEN..."

COME, EMIL  
VOIST!



"AND I REALIZED NOW THAT I WAS TO SPEND AN ETERNITY PAYING,  
OVER AND OVER AGAIN WITHOUT END, FOR ANNA'S MURDER."



"I KNEW WHEN THEY SOWN MY HEAD BACK ONTO MY  
BODY, AND WHEN THEY CARTED ME OFF IN AN OLD WAGON,  
WHEN THEY BURIED ME IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE, I KNEW  
WHEN HEINRICH EMPTIED THE POISON DOWN HIS BULL-  
LIKE THROAT..."

I'M COMING, ANNA! I'M COMING!



"IT WAS A CALL I COULD NOT RESIST. I ROSE TO ANSWER  
IT... AND FACED HIM... HEINRICH, MY EXECUTIONER..."

COME, EMIL VOIST!

NO! DAMPT! NO! NO!



HEH, HEH! A WEE BIT ON THE GOLF SIDE,  
ER, KIDDEST YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT THAT  
EMIL HAD A HEAD FOR BUSINESS... HEH...  
MONEY BUSINESS? WELL, IF YOU'RE  
STILL IN THE MOOD FOR MORRISITY,  
STICK AROUND... K, K'S READY WITH MORE,  
SO TIDDLE-BOO FOR NOW!



THE  
END





# SHARP

As far back as he could remember, Milton Canasta had hated his miserly old Aunt. For, while the impoverished nephew scabbled for pennies to feed himself, ancient Aunt Bridget was busily squandering the once-fabled Canasta fortune. Her collection of antique jewelry, for instance, had cost enough to keep Milton in cakes and ale for the rest of his life!

The idea that the collection was still growing infuriated Milton: before long every last dollar would be gone, converted into baubles long since turned green with age...into bracelets which were ancient before the time of the Crusades. A half-million dollars buried away for this junk, and Aunt Bridget couldn't even *see* the hideous junk! What good was the most bizarre curio collection this side of the moon, Milton Canasta thought bitterly, to a woman who was BLIND?

He heard footsteps outside, on the graveled walk, and moved toward the window. Down on the terrace the old witch was strolling, guiding herself by touching gnarled shrubs and decaying tree trunks whose precise location she had long ago memorized. And as he watched with hate-filled eyes, a thought came to Milton Canasta's mind. He was alone here in the treasure room: why shouldn't he cram his pockets with golden amulets and fabulous necklaces? He could walk past Aunt Bridget, then, without the slightest risk of detection!

Feverishly, Milton grabbed up fistfuls of the priceless stuff and dropped it into the pockets of his tattered coat. With a snicker, he started out of the room; before he reached the doorway a plan for final triumph over hateful Aunt Bridget struck him. His hand plunged into his pocket and withdrew an ancient ring...one on which was the carved image of a curled snake. With a whinny of delight he

slipped the ring over the third finger of his right hand. It was no sooner in place than he heard the thrum of heels. Aunt Bridget clacked into the room, her withered hands using the walls as guide-lines. Under her very eyes Milton would walk off with her collection!

"Got to run along now, Aunty," Milton said. His Aunt's right hand shot out, fingers extended. Milton started, then recalled that this contemptible relative prided herself on the firmness of her handclasp. Milton's own hand slowly swung forward; their fingers locked in a steely grip. For a moment Milton thought he experienced a pinprick of pain in one of his fingers, but he shrugged off the notion. He quickly stepped past Bridget Canasta and moved toward the door.

He never made it. For the agony in his hand increased to the point wherein his eyes turned watery and he found it almost impossible to breathe. He staggered, turning unbelieving eyes down upon his hand. The finger which wore the snake ring was already puffy and violent-red. Milton gasped and began to sag toward the floor; the pain in his finger had now spread to his shoulder and, along veins and arteries screaming in frightful anguish, to the rest of his writhing body. *The ring, he thought in panic, it must've been loaded with POISON! I've read about horrors like this...a needle jammed into the flesh of the ring-wearer, and the pressure of a firm handshake releases deadly...*

But Milton Canasta was unable to continue with his intriguing theory. For by now his body had ceased to thrash spasmodically, inasmuch as it was growing cold and rigid. And his eyeballs were staring straight ahead, wide and incredibly criss-crossed with ruptured blood vessels. Sightless, of course.



# DO PEOPLE LAUGH AT YOU FOR READING COMIC BOOKS?



DO YOU HEAR PEOPLE FAINTLY SNICKERING BEHIND YOUR BACK AS YOU RIDE THE TRAIN TO SCHOOL OR WORK? EXAMINE THE SITUATION! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR PANTS? IS THE COMIC BOOK YOU ARE READING ONE OF THE KIND WITH THE LOUD, GARISH COVERS? NO WONDER PEOPLE LAUGH! DO YOU WANT TO LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT READING COMIC BOOKS ALL YOUR LIFE?... IF YOU DON'T, THEN LISTEN TO THIS! **MAD** COMIC BOOK HAS A NEW COVER DESIGN THAT MAKES IT LOOK LIKE HIGH-CLASS LITERATURE! BUY THE LATEST ISSUE OF **MAD**, THEN YOU CAN LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT READING HIGH-CLASS LITERATURE!...BUY **MAD** AT YOUR NEWSSTAND...OR SUBSCRIBE!

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# THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

*Well, hell! I'm gonna start this column with some high-class PERVERTED POETRY. How about this one, submitted by John Wyckoff of Palo Alto, Calif.:*

Mary was a little ghoul  
Her father killed her dead!  
Now Mary's on the dinner table  
Between two hunks of bread!

*And then there's the contribution of G.R.D. of Alto Vista, Kansas:*

I tried to kill my mother-in-law . .  
Bashed in her head with a club,  
Sawed her in half with a razor-sharp sword,  
And boiled her remains in a tub  
I beat her with my blackjack,  
I stabbed her with my knife,  
I threw her head-first downstairs  
But she jumped back full of life!

So I bought me a weird comic book,  
I was called "The Vault of Horror,"  
I took it home to her last night  
And placed it down before 'er.  
She took one look . . . her eyes bulged out  
Her face turned purty-white.  
"The Vault of Horror" did the trick,  
She died all right . . . from fright!

*Now some FULSATING POGRAMS beamed in by Larry Hensch of Alton, Ill., and Aldo Sarno of Brooklyn, N. Y.:*

DEATH OF RILEY  
MARTIN VEIN, PRIVATE BLOOD-VESSEL  
STRIKE IT DEAD  
BREAK THE BLOOD-BANK  
STOP THE BREATHING  
I LOVE LYMPH  
COCAINE, FLAM, AND AGONY

*Bob Burg of Long Island, N. Y. keeps MORRID MOVIES going with:*

KILL ME KATE  
SNOW WHITE AND  
THE SEVERED DWARFS  
HOUSE OF WAX  
HOW TO BURY A MILLIONAIRE  
GENTLEMEN BEHEAD BLONDES

*In the LURID LYRICS division, to the tune of "My Bonnie," Pete Olyphant, Pres. of E.C. Fan-Address Club Chapter 46, Washington, D. C., suggests:*

My Bonnie looked into a gas tank  
To see what its contents might be  
By dropping a match thereinto . . .  
Oh bring back my Bonnie to me!

*E. Nelson Bridwell of Oklahoma City was so inspired by Mike Reynolds' parody on "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" that he sent one in too:*

Strike me out on the 300 ball  
Strike me out in the sun,  
Send me with honey and leave me there —  
"Won't be long till my bones are stripped bare,  
For they chomp, chomp, chomp, [little ants do  
Until they've eaten their fill . .  
And there's one, two, three million ants  
In the old ant hill!"

*Enough of that devil! Let's have a couple letters:*

Dear VK,

I'm a high-school senior, and I was prompted to write when I noticed how few girls' names appeared in your letter columns. I just want to tell you that at least ONE girl thanks your mag to top. (And then too, you're such a handsome devil . . . you just make my flesh crawl.) If my letter is printed, please use only my initials!

L.P.  
Fannerville, Calif.

*But of course dear! Think I'd print your WHOLE name, and not the CRYPT-KEEPER leaving my name? If I can sneak away from Devilina (one page!), I'll be right out to sunny California to see you . . . that?*

.. Please congratulate Johnny Craig and Ghastly Hagel for E.C.'s most heart-warming story "Shoe Bottom Eyes" . . . on page 55. Ruth Backlin  
Ridgewood, N. Y.

*No, They'll want money!*

And speaking of money . . . how about some commercials? They're still pushing the 3-D mag! They got so many 3-D mags cluttering up the E.C. office, it should happen too (real publisher)! And that's the trouble! It didn't happen to them! Anyway . . . if you have not yet read THREE DIMENSIONAL TALES FROM THE CRYPT OF TERROR or THREE DIMENSIONAL E.C. CLASSICS why bother! But if you, once on bothering, SPECIAL PRICE 15c each . . . two for 30c! And, while ordering, stick in an extra buck for a subscription to MY mag . . . right mean . . . mail's enveloped! The address for all this stuff is:

The Vault-Keeper  
Room 706, Dept. 47  
225 Lafayette Street  
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.



HERE IS A TALE ABOUT A CARETAKER,  
AND ODDLY ENOUGH, IT'S CALLED...

# TAKE CARE



JEFFERSON BATES, LEGAL TRUSTEE  
OF THE HUGE MANSION, SMOKED AT  
THE THICK LAYER OF DUST, THE  
NUMEROUS SPIDER WEBS, LISTENED  
IN DISGUST TO THE SCUTTLEING RATS  
BETWEEN THE WALLS, AND CONTINUED  
DOWN THE SILENT HALLWAY.

COME, COME, MR.  
BENCH? THIS WAY?

YES, SIR?





ALBRECHT BENCH, THE NEWLY-HIRED CARPENTER, SHUFFLED SLOWLY BEHIND MR. GATES, HIS EYES WARILY SCANNING THE DREARY SURROUNDINGS.

"TCH! LOOKS TO ME LIKE THERE AIN'T BEEN ANY WORK DONE ON THIS HOUSE IN FIFTY YEARS!"

"AND YOU'RE RIGHT! BUT ACTUALLY THE PLACE HAS ONLY BEEN UNOCCUPIED FOR A FEW MONTHS!"



"PARDON MY SAYING ED, MR. BATES, SIR... BUT THIS HOUSE LIKE TO BITE A BODY THE SHAKES!"

"I AGREE... IT IS A STRANGE PLACE! HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS HOW OLD IT IS, AND I'VE TOLD IT'S HONEYCOMBED WITH SECRET PANELS AND PASSAGES! AND FOR SOME REASON IT WAS BUILT WITH A BELL TOWER!"



"MUST HAVE BEEN REAL STRANGE PEOPLE LIVIN' HERE!"

"YES! THE LAST OWNER, AVERY BALLUR, WAS A WEIRD SORT! WEALTHY BUT MISERLY AND A RECLUSE AS WELL!"



"HE WAS HARDLY EVER SEEN BY THE TOWNFOLK, BUT HE WAS AN EMBLY, CRIPPLED BROUCH, WHO HAD A COMPANION TO WAIT ON HIM."



"THE COMPANION WAS NAMED DRESS? RUDDOLPH DRESS? HE DID ALL THE BUYING OF SUPPLIES, AND BURNED AVERY FOR MANY YEARS!"

"RUDDOLPH, YOU IDIOT! HE BLOW OUT ALL THOSE CANDLES! YOU'RE BURNING THEM!"

"ALL RIGHT, AVERY!"



"THE REST OF THE STORY IS ONLY SUPPOSITION, BUT IT SEEMS THAT RUDDOLPH WAS QUITE ENVIDOUS OF AVERY AND WAS ONLY WAITING FOR HIM TO DIE, FOR HE EXPECTED TO INHERIT ALL OF AVERY'S WEALTH."

"I'VE TOLD YOU OFTEN ENOUGH THAT BURNING SO MANY CANDLES IS JUST A WASTE! WHY CAN'T YOU REMEMBER?"

"ALL RIGHT, AVERY!"



"AS I SAY, THIS IS ONLY SUPPOSITION! NO ONE KNOWS WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, BUT THEY SAY THAT ONE NIGHT, RUDDOLPH LOST HIS PATIENCE..."

"ENO? THAT YOU, RUDDOLPH? RUDDOLPH IS THAT YOU? COMFOUND IT, LIGHT A CANDLE, WILL YOU?"





"THE TOWNSPEOPLE HEARD THE STEEPLE-BELL RINGING ALL RIGHT LONG, AND THE FOLLOWING DAY THEY INVESTIGATED. THEY FOUND AVERY HANGED...SWAYING TO AND FRO ON THE BELL ROPE..."



"THAT'S QUITE A STORY, MR. BATES? OR... THIS HERE MY ROOM?"

"YES? I HOPE YOU FIND IT COMFORTABLE! I'M SURE YOU WON'T MIND THE FACT THAT THIS IS THE ROOM WHERE THEY FOUND AVERY HANGED!"



"OH... NO, OF COURSE NOT! IS... IS THAT THERE THE SAME ROPE WHAT HUNG HIM?"

"OH YES! THAT'S THE BELL ROPE! AN ODD CASE... NEVER DID SOLVE IT, YOU KNOW!"



"NEVER SOLVED IT? I THOUGHT YOU SAID HIS COMPANION DID IT?"

"EVERYONE THOUGHT SO! BUT WHEN THEY READ OLD AVERY'S WILL, THERE WAS NO MENTION AT ALL OF RUODLPH, SO THEY CLAIMED HE HAD NO MOTIVE!"



"TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT, THE STATE JUST COULDN'T PROVE THAT RUODLPH KILLED AVERY AND FINALLY HE WAS ACQUITTED FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE!"

"GLORY BE..."



"BUT IT WAS RIGHT AFTER THE TRIAL THAT RUODLPH DISAPPEARED! AND NO ONE HAS THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM! ALL THIS TOWN PLACE, AS I SAID, SEVERAL MONTHS AGO!"



"AND SINCE THE LEGAL FIRM I REPRESENT WISHES TO SELL THIS HOUSE, NUMEROUS REPAIRS MUST FIRST BE DONE! YOUR JOB IS TO TAKE CARE OF THE PLACE IN GENERAL!"

"I SEE, MR. BATES!"





WELL, I MUST BE LEARNING! I'M SURE YOU'LL ENCOUNTER NO DIFFICULTIES, BUT I MUST CAUTION YOU TO BE CAREFUL, IF YOU DISCOVER ANY SECRET PANELS OR PASSAGES, YOU UNDERSTAND?

OH, YES, SIR? I'LL BE VERY CAREFUL, HAVE NO FEAR!



MR. DOUCH LISTENED TO THE STEPS GRADUALLY FADING DOWN THE CORRIDORS TO THE FRONT OF THE OLD HOUSE. HE HEARD THE FRONT DOOR SLAM SHUT, AND SUDDENLY HE FELT VERY MUCH... TOO MUCH... ALONE!



FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS, MR. DOUCH PROWLED THE HUGE HOUSE, FAMILIARISING HIMSELF WITH IT, JUMPING AT THE SOUND OF EVERY SCOTTISH RAT.



EXPLORING NERVOUSLY THE DARK, MUSTY CELLAR, THE MANY BLACK, GLIMMY STAIRWELLS BRUSHING ASIDE THE COBWEBS THAT SEEMED TO COVER ALL...



UNTIL WITH A JAWNS HE FELT HE WAS LOST IN THE MAZE OF ROOMS AND CORRIDORS... UNTIL HE FELT THE OUTSIDE WORLD NEVER WAS.



.. AND IN SPITE OF HIMSELF HE RAN BLINDLY IN THE ENORME HALLS, DOWN CLATTERING STAIRS TO THE MAIN HALL, THE REAR-CORRIDOR... HIS ROOM.



HE HUDDLED CLOSE TO THE CANDLE, GRATEFUL FOR ITS MEAGER LIGHT, AND STUDIED HIS SURROUNDINGS. HE COULDN'T TAKE HIS EYES FROM THE BELL-ROPE THAT HUNG UP THROUGH A GAPING HOLE IN THE CEILING.





IN COMPLIANCE WITH HIS ORDERS, MR. DENCH FORCED HIMSELF TO MAKE A TOUR OF THE OLD MANSION BEFORE GOING TO BED. HE ROAMED THROUGH THE HALLS, HIS HEART FLUTTERING BECAUSE OF HIS GROWING FEAR.



THERE GO THOSE SOUNDS! DAMNED! SURE FEEL A LOT BETTER IF THAT MURDERER WERE LOCKED UP 'STEAD OF RUNNIN' LOOSE SOMEWHERE!

NO TELLIN' WHERE HE IS! PEOPLE JUST DON'T KNOW! MIGHT...MIGHT EVEN BE RIGHT HERE IN THIS HOUSE WITH ME RIGHT NOW!

DAMNED! MAYBE THAT'S HIM HIDIN' ALL THAT NOISE 'TWEEN THE WALLS!



HE MOVED QUIETLY TO THE UNUSED KITCHEN, OPENED THE PANTRY DOOR.

POWHA! STUFF AND MONSIEE! A GOOD HOT CUP OF JAVA WILL FIX MY HEAD TO THINKIN' RIGHT. LANDABENTY! SOMEONE'S BEEN PILFERIN' MY CRAB!



AIN'T NO RAFTS STEALIN' BREAD AND BEANS AN' COFFEY! THIS HOUSE IS HIDIN' MORE'N JUST ME IN IT AND I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL!



HE REACHED THE END OF THE HALL, TURNED THE CORNER, AND AS HE PASSED THE STAIRS, HE BLANCED UP!



LANDABENTY! I KNEW IT! I KNEW IT! THIS HOUSE IS SPOOKED!

TERRIFIED, HE RAN BACK TO HIS ROOM, SLAMMED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM AND LOCKED IT! GASPING FOR AIR, HE STAGGERED TO HIS BED, FUMBLINGLY LIGHTED THE CANDLE.



I'M THROUGH! TOMORROW I BUIT! I DON'T NEED NO JOB BAD ENOUGH TO MAKE MY HEART STOP TICKIN'! NOSIREENOR!

HE SAT CLOSE TO THE BLOWING CANDLE, LISTENING TO THE CLUMPSING AND SCURRYINGS. AND AS HE SAT, HE REALIZED WITH A SHOCK THAT THE SOUNDS HAD CHANGED.



DORRONE! SOUNDS SOUNDS KINDA LIKE FOOTSTEPS KINDA! AN' THEY'RE COMIN' THIS WAY!



HE LISTENED INTENTLY, HOPING THAT HIS EARS WERE DECEIVING HIM, PRAYING THAT THE PAIN IN HIS CHEST WOULD CEASE! THE SHUFFLING STEPS CREPT CLOSER, TILL HE HEARD THEM STOP... JUST OUTSIDE HIS DOOR!



BLACKNESS ENVELOPED HIM! HE TRIED TO FIND MATCHES BUT ONLY KNOCKED OVER THE CANDLE! HE STOPPED... THE FOOTSTEPS WERE MOVING TOWARD HIM



HE FELT A COLD CLAMMINESS NEAR HIM! THE STEPS WERE DIRECTLY BESIDE HIM, MOVING CLOSER, AND AS HIS IMMENSE TERROR CONSTRICTED HIS HEART, HE SCREAMED!



HE WAITED, STARING BREATHLESSLY AT THE DOOR! AND THEN HE HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF A KEY IN THE LOCK, THE SOLE-CAKING TURNING OF THE KNOB... AND THE DOOR CREAKED SLOWLY OPEN! INSTANTLY, A SEVERE DRAFT RUSHED THROUGH THE ROOM



A SEARING, AGONIZING PAIN SHOT THROUGH HIS CHEST! HE CLUTCHED AT HIS HEART, GASPING, TREMBLING! HIS HEAD SWAM, AND ONLY THROUGH THE WHIRLPOOL, HE SENSED THE FOOTSTEPS CONTINUING AWAY...



THE MONDREMOUS TOLLING OF THE BELL AROUSED THE TOWNSPEOPLE THE FOLLOWING MORNING. GREATLY EXCITED, HIGHLY CURIOUS, THEY BANGED TOGETHER TO INVESTIGATE. THEY FOUND THE NEW CARETAKER LYING ON HIS BED, DEAD OF A HEART ATTACK. IN THE ROOM'S CORNER THE MISSING COMPANION WAS HANGING LIMPLY FROM THE BELL-ROPE! AND BENEATH HIM SPRAWLED GROTESQUELY ON THE FLOOR, WAS THE ROTTED, STINKING CORPSE OF THE FORMER OWNER, AVERY...



HEH, HEH! MR. BENCH, THE NEW CARETAKER, SHOULD HAVE HIRED A CARETAKER TO TAKE CARE OF HIM! ACTUALLY, ALL THE NOISE HE HEARD BETWEEN THE WALLS WASN'T BATS... IT WAS AVERY AND HIS COMPANION—MURDERER HAVING A RAT-FACE! HEH, HEH! (THE COMPANION LOST.) ANYWAY, IF YOU DON'T HAVE A SUBSCRIPTION TO THIS MAG, SEND A BUCK (CASH) TO ME! YOU'LL FIND THE ADDRESS SOMEWHERE, SO DON'T BE SO LAZY! IT'S GOOD READING! (HEH)



THE  
END



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M LAUGHING! I REALLY SHOULD BE BARLING  
OVER THIS FOOL FAPE. I'M READY TO SERVE YOU SLOP-LOVING SLOOPY!  
(IT'S THE MOST PITIFUL POLING PUTRESCENCE I EVER THREW UP  
TO YOU... STIRRED WITH SICKENING SADNESS, STEWED WITH A HAUSEATING  
NIAGARA OF TEARS, SEASONED WITH PITY PEPPER TO A POLLUTED DELICACY  
AND GARNISHED WITH SYMPATHY BLIME!) OF COURSE, THIS TALE ALSO HAS  
SPONTY FOR YOUR BLOOD, YOU KNOW! NO, SPOONS READY, FINGERS AT  
WORKER... NOW GOBBLE UP THIS AWESOME GARBAGE I CALL...

## OH! HENRY!





YOU SIT THERE, DETECTIVE LIEUTENANT LIONEL HART, YOUR FACE TWISTED, YOUR MIND REETHING... STARING AT THE TEN DOLLAR BILL IN YOUR HAND? YOU STARE AT YOUR NOW USELESS MONEY... AND YOU THINK BACK TO WHEN IT ALL STARTED



YOU NEVER *DID* TAKE ANY DUFF FROM THOSE BRITERS, HART? THAT'S WHY YOUR FELLOW OFFICERS CALLED YOU 'HARD HART'? YOU TAUGHT THEM RESPECT FOR THE LAW



FILTHY BERSERK? THAT'S WHAT THEY *DESERVED*? YOU HAD TO *PROTECT* SOCIETY? YOU HAD TO UPHOLD THE LAW? IT WAS YOUR DUFF?



... AND IF THINGS GOT SLOW, THERE WAS ALWAYS THE RAGGED MOPCHERS, THE MISERABLE, DOWNTRODDEN WRETCHES YOU ARRESTED FOR VAGRANCY IN YOUR ZEAL TO CARRY OUT THE LAW TO ITS FINAL LETTER



IT WAS JUST ONE MONTH AGO, LIONEL HART, THAT YOU PROWLED YOUR BEAT AS A PLAINCLOTHESMAN, COVERING THE MIDTOWN SECTION. IT HAD BEEN A GOOD DAY... YOU CAUGHT A PICK-POCKET RED-HANDED!



IT GAVE YOU A SENSE OF POWER TO BE AN OFFICER OF THE LAW, DIDN'T IT, HART? YOU DROBBERED DOWN THE STREET *LOOKING* FOR TROUBLE...



YES, IT HAD BEEN A MOST SATISFYING DAY? BUT THE *JUST* WAS YET TO COME... FOR AS YOU PASSED THE LITTLE BROCCET STORE, YOU HAPPENED TO GLANCE IN... AND YOU SAW THE LITTLE OLD LADY NERVOUSLY STUFFING A LOAF OF BREAD INTO HER SHOPPING BAG.





YOU WATCHED HER CLOSELY, HARRY!  
YOU SAW THE STOREKEEPER TURN  
TO WAIT ON A CUSTOMER, SAW THE  
LITTLE LADY HURRY FROM THE  
PLACE...

NOT SO FAST,  
LADY! YOU'RE  
UNDER ARREST!

ENFOR. PLEASE!  
I... I WAS COMING  
TO PAY!

YOU HAD HER SIZED UP, ALL RIGHT?  
JUST A BREAKEY DAME WHO MADE A  
PRACTICE OF LEACHING? RECALLED  
HER BLUFF, DIDN'T YOU, HARRY?

DEAF? THEN  
PAY THE MAN!

ER... WELL...  
IT... IT SEEMS  
DEAR ME! OH,  
DEAR ME!

PLEASE, OFFICER! I... I KNOW IT  
LOOKS BAD! BUT I'M NOT A THIEF!  
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I EVER TOOK  
ANY THING! HONESTLY! I WAS  
DESPERATE! MY HUSBAND IS SICK!  
HE'S HOME NOW... WAITING FOR ME!

IT MADE YOU FEEL GOOD TO KNOW SHE WAS CAUGHT!  
YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE GABLED ON! YOU EVEN  
ADMIRER HER ACTING, WITH HER SWEET OLD FACE  
SO TROUBLED, HER GENTLE VOICE SO PAINED...

MY POOR HENRY! HE'S AN INVALID IN A  
WHEELCHAIR! I SUPPORTED HIM BY SEWING...  
UNTIL I GOT ARTHRITIS SO BAD IN MY FINGERS!  
WE HAVE NO... NO MONEY! I... I...

YOU HAD TO ADMIT IT WAS A BILLY OF A STOREMATE... AND  
POO'D LISTENED TO SOME OF THE BEST!

YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, OFFICER? MY HENRY  
HE'S HELPLESS! I HAVE TO FEED HIM! HE NEEDS  
FOOD-OR HE'LL DIE! HE'LL STARVE TO DEATH! I,  
I HAD TO BRING HIM... SOMETHING!

THE STORIES THEY MADE UP OUT OF THIN AIR TO  
COVER THEIR ROTTEN CRIMES MADE YOU DOUBT! YOU  
SHAKLED TO SHUT HER UP, BUT WHO SHOULD STEP IN  
BUT THE ROBBED STOREKEEPER HIMSELF!

WAIT! DON'T ARREST HER!  
IF SHE NEEDS THE FOOD  
THAT BADLY, WHY...

WHY? DON'T TELL  
ME YOU FELL FOR THAT  
SOB STORY! SHE'S  
JUST TRYING TO WORM  
HER WAY FREE!

LOOK... IT'S ONLY A  
DOLLAR'S WORTH OF  
STUFF! I WON'T  
PRESS CHARGES!

WELL, I WILL! I SWEAR HER  
STEAL IT! I CAUGHT HER!  
NO CRONY IS GOING TO MAKE  
A FOOL OF ME!



OFFICER, PLEASE! PERHAPS IT WAS WRONG OF ME TO DO WHAT I DID, BUT I HAD NO OTHER WAY! PLEASE! I MUST HAVE FOOD FOR HENRY! TRY TO UNDERSTAND! I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH!

NOTHING DOING! YOU BROKE THE LAW!

COULDN'T YOU LEND ME THE DOLLAR TO PAY FOR THIS FOOD? I SWEAR YOU'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK. ANYTHING! IT'S ONLY A DOLLAR! PLEASE! (SOB)

COME ON, SISTER! TELL IT TO THE JUDGE!



YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE SCORCHED ALL THE WAY TO THE STATIONHOUSE. HOW THE SERGEANT DROVE YOU ASIDE.

LOOK, LIEUTENANT! SHE'S A SWEET OLD DAME! COULDN'T WE JUST...

HOPE SAID BOON! HER FOR SHOP-LIFTING!

THE SERGEANT HAD BOOKED HER...

I'LL SEE THAT THE JUDGE SLAPS YOU WITH SIXTY DAYS FOR ALL THE TROUBLE YOU'VE GIVEN ME!

SIXTY DAYS? OH NO... NO! MY POOR HENRY! HE'LL STARVE!

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? HENRY'S ALL ALONE! HE'S PARALYZED! HE'S COMPLETELY HELPLESS! HE (SOB) HE CAN'T EVEN CALL FOR HELP! I'M THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD WHO CARES FOR HIM... WHO KEEPS HIM ALIVE! PLEASE... PLEASE!



YOU WERE RICK OF LISTENING TO HER LYING DRIVEL. WEREN'T YOU? YOU WERE GLAD WHEN YOU FINALLY REACHED HER CELL... WHEN THE JAILER OPENED IT.

I KNOW YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME! BUT SO WHERE WE LIVE... THE OLD SHACK ON STONE STREET... ACROSS THE TRACKS! YOU'LL FIND HIM THERE. WAITING FOR ME! DON'T LET HIM STARVE! SO AND HELP HIM! (SOB)

THE CELL DOOR CLANGED SHUT AND YOU TURNED AWAY. COLONY, LIONEL HART! YOU IGNORED HER SUPPLICATING HAND STRETCHED OUT TO YOU.

PLEASE! FOR THE SAKE OF AN OLD WOMAN! WILL YOU HELP MY POOR HENRY? OH PLEASE! PLEASE!

CUT IT OUT, SISTER! I'LL SEE YOU IN COURT!





YOU SLEPT WELL THAT NIGHT! AND IN COURT THE NEXT DAY, YOU HUSTLED HER THROUGH, SO SHE WOULDNT WASTE THE JUDGE'S TIME WITH HER PACK OF LIES...

SIXTY DAYS! NEXT CASE!

LIEUTENANT! PLEASE! DON'T LET MY POOR HENRY STARVE!

TAKE HER AWAY, JAILER! SHE'S ALL YOURS!



AND THEN YOU HEARD HOW SHE HAD BEEN RELEASED IN ONE MONTH FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR.

HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT? SHE'LL BE BACK TO SHOPLIFTING IN NO TIME!



YOU DECIDED TO SEE HER, TO WARN HER THAT YOU'D BE KEEPING AN EYE ON HER, THAT SHE'D BEST GO STRAIGHT!

BET SHE GAVE ME A PHONY. NO, THERE'S THE CHANCE - JUST LIKE SHE SAID!



YOU LEFT HER THEN, HART, TO BE THROWN IN A STEEL CELL... YOUR JOB WAS DONE! YOU DIDN'T BOTHER TO CHECK UP ON HER. OBVIOUS LIES... IF YOU BELIEVED EVERYTHING THEY TOLD YOU, THE JAIL WOULD BE EMPTY! YOU NEVER GAVE A THOUGHT TO HER MISERY AND AGONY...



HMM... DOOR OPEN! SHE WAS FREED THIS AFTERNOON... SHOULD BE HERE SOON. I'LL WAIT INSIDE... SNOOP AROUND A BIT! NEVER CAN TELL...



YOU ENTERED THE GRAY LITTLE Hovel, AND IN THE DIM LIGHT YOU TRIED TO PEEK THROUGH THE DARKNESS OF THE ROOM. YOU OPENED A BUREAU DRAWER...

HMP! NOTHING VALUABLE HERE! GUESS SHE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING POOR, ANYWAY!

WHAT'S THAT ROOM?



YOU SWUNG OPEN THE CREAKY DOOR, HART! YOU SAW LITTLE IN THE DIM NOONLIGHT... BUT THEN SUDDENLY YOU STIFFENED IN SHOCK!

WHY? WHAT'S THAT? A WHEEL... TWO... TWO WHEELS? OH, NO!





WHY DID YOUR EYES PULSE, LIEUTENANT? WHAT DID YOU SEE THAT SENT A SMASHING SHOCK-WAVE THROUGH YOUR BRAMP WHAT RIPPED A MOANING GASP FROM YOUR LIPS, TURNED YOUR MUSCLES TO WATER AND MADE YOUR HEART THUD AGAINST YOUR RIBS LIKE A WILD THING?

NO... NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE!



BUT IT WAS! THE ONE THING YOU DIDN'T EXPECT OR WANT TO SEE! THE PROOF THAT THE OLD LADY HAD NOT LIED! THE PROOF SITTING IN THE WHEELCHAIR... NOT MOVING... SO VERY SILENT... SO VERY, VERY STILL...

HENRY!



YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO FEEL FOR HIS PULSE, HENRY... THAT HAD BEEN DONE A LONG TIME! YOU COULD TELL... THE CONDITION OF THE BODY... THE FOUL, BREAKING STENCH...

...DIED... HELPLESS? RIGHT IS... IN THE CHAIR?



HIS SIGHTLESS EYES ACCUSED YOU! IN ONE SCREECHING MOMENT YOU SAW THIS PARALYZED OLD MAN... ALL ALONE... WAITING FOR THE ONE PERSON WHO COULD COME BACK AND SAVE HIM!

AND... I PUT HER... BEHIND BARS?



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YOUR LIFE, YOU CRINED, YOU WHIMPERED! STARKLY, IT FACED YOU... AND YOU HAD TO SPILL IT FROM YOUR LIPS BEFORE IT STRUCK SLED YOU!

I... I KILLED HIM!



THEN YOU HEARD THE SOUND BEHIND YOU... THE SOFT STEEP! YOU WHIRLED... AND THERE WAS THE LITTLE OLD LADY BACK FROM PRISON! WHAT WOULD SHE SAY?

WELL... HELLO, LIEUTENANT! HOW NICE TO FIND YOU HERE... KEEPING HENRY COMPANY!



DIDN'T SHE KNOW? COULDN'T SHE SUSPECT YOU STOOD IN GUMB PANE AS SHE BUSTLED OVER TO THE... THE PHONE IN THE WHEEL-CHAIR... BENT DOWN AND KISSED THE COLD CHEEK...

HELLO, HENRY DEAR! DID YOU THINK I'D NEVER COME BACK... IN TIME TO FEED YOU?





SHE SPOKE AS IF SHE HAD BEEN  
DONE *ONLY AN HOUR*! AS IF SHE  
HAD RETURNED *SOONER* WITH THE  
FOOD HE HAD NEEDED... A *MONTH*  
AHEAD!

WOULDN'T YOU HAVE SOME  
TEA, LIEUTENANT? IT'S  
ALL I CAN OFFER! YOU  
UNDERSTAND?



AM... EN  
WHY...  
YES, YES,  
THANK  
YOU!

YOU SWALLOWED DOWN THE BITTER CUP,  
YOUR MIND CHURNING IN NERVOUS!  
HER NEXT WORDS LASHED YOU LIKE  
A WHIP...

NOW I MUST FEED  
POOR HENRY!



SHE WAS *DRIFT*! BUT YOU HAD TO  
ATTEND... TO MAKE AMENDS! YOU DREW  
A TEN DOLLAR BILL FROM YOUR  
WALLET...

HERE, MADAM!  
PLEASE TAKE  
IT... PLEASE!

OH, I WON'T NEED  
THAT! HENRY'S  
MEAL IS TAKEN  
CARE OF ALREADY!



BUT WHY WERE YOUR ARMS SO *STIFF*, SUDDENLY? WHY  
DID YOUR MUSCLES SEEM TO *FREEZE*? AND THEN YOU  
HEARD HER SPEAK AGAIN, SO SWEETLY WITH THAT  
WARM, FRIENDLY SMILE...

YOU SAW, I *POISONED*  
YOU, LIEUTENANT! IN THE  
TEA... *NOT POISON*? IT  
KILLS MEN *SLOWER* THAN  
BATS. HEH, HEH! IT  
PARALYZED THEM  
FIRST!



ALL THE WAY HOME, I WAS *THINKING*... WHAT CAN I  
FEED POOR HENRY? HE'LL BE SO *HUNGRY*! STARVED,  
YOU MIGHT SAY. AFTER A *WHOLE MONTH*! BUT WHEN  
I SAW YOU WAITING FOR ME HERE, IT CAME TO ME! HEH!  
IT WAS SO *SIMPLE*! SO VERY SIMPLE!



SO YOU SAT THERE,  
DETECTIVE-LIEUTENANT  
LIONEL "HARD" HART,  
YOUR FACE TWISTED...  
WITH PAIN! YOUR  
MIND SEETHING WITH  
AGONY! YOUR *MUS-  
CLES* ARE PARALYZED,  
BUT *NOT YOUR NERVES*...  
DOWN IN YOUR FEET  
WHERE THE *CUTTING*  
STARTS! AND YOU STARE  
SO HELPLESSLY AT THE  
MONEY IN YOUR HANDS!  
THE *USELESS* MONEY...  
THAT A *MONTH* AGO  
WOULD HAVE SAVED  
YOUR LIFE *TEN TIMES*  
OVER!



HEH, HEH!  
TO U SHALL  
EAT WELL,  
HENRY,  
DEAR...  
HAHAHA!

THE  
END

HEE, HEE! NOW WASN'T THAT *SWEET*  
OF THE OLD LADY TO FORGIVE ALL, AND  
HAVE HIM FOR *DINNER*? ANYWAY, THAT'S  
HOW HART ENDED UP IN THE *BOOP*, NOT  
TO MENTION THE *ENTREE* AND ALL THE  
*FIXINGS*! *DESSERT*, ANYONE? HEH!  
DON'T TURN *GREEN*... TURN THE *PAGE*!

OH! THIS IS THE  
END OF THE  
BOOK, ISN'T IT?  
WELL, TILL NEXT  
TIME, THEN...  
BYE-BYE-EE!





# NOW YOU CAN FLY A REAL JET PLANE!



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As of this printing, the U.S. Air Force's F-102 does not have a name, because the super sonic airplane is brand new and still in the category of a military secret. The Jetex F-102 is the first model of its kind.

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MONEY-  
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NO. 38

SEPT.

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# THE VAULT OF

# HORROR<sup>®</sup>

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



JOHN  
FANN  
CRUIS



# ARE YOU A RED DUPE?

IN THE TOWN OF GAZDOOSKY IN THE HEART OF SOVIET RUSSIA, YOUNG MELVIN BUZUNKEN - SKOVITCHSKY PUBLISHED A COMIC MAGAZINE...



...SO THEY CAME AND SMASHED HIS FOUR-COLOR PRESS...



...AND HUNG POOR MELVIN THE NEXT MORNING!



- HERE IN AMERICA, WE CAN STILL PUBLISH COMIC MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, SUCKS, BOOKS AND THE BIBLE. WE DON'T HAVE TO SEND THEM TO A CENSOR FIRST. NOT YET...
- BUT THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN AMERICA WHO WOULD LIKE TO CENSOR... WHO WOULD LIKE TO SUPPRESS COMICS. IT ISN'T THAT THEY DON'T LIKE COMICS FOR THEM! THEY DON'T LIKE THEM FOR YOU!
- THESE PEOPLE SAY THAT COMIC BOOKS AREN'T AS GOOD FOR CHILDREN AS NO COMIC BOOKS, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE NO-GOODS. SOME ARE DO-GOODERS. SOME ARE WELL-MEANING, AND SOME ARE JUST PLAIN MEAN.
- BUT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH AN AMAZING REVELATION. AFTER MUCH SEARCHING OF NEWSPAPER FILES, WE'VE MADE AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY:

## THE GROUP MOST ANXIOUS TO DESTROY COMICS ARE THE COMMUNISTS!

- WE'RE SERIOUS! NO KIDDIN'! HERE! READ THIS!

THE [COMMUNIST] "DAILY WORKER" OF JULY 13, 1953 BITTERLY ATTACKED THE ROLE OF:

\* SO-CALLED 'COMICS' IN BRUTALIZING AMERICAN YOUTH, THE BETTER TO PREPARE THEM FOR MILITARY SERVICE IN IMPLEMENTING OUR GOVERNMENT'S AIMS OF WORLD DOMINATION, AND TO ACCEPT THE ATROCITIES NOW BEING PERPETRATED BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN IN KOREA UNDER THE FLAG OF THE UNITED NATIONS.\*

THIS ARTICLE ALSO QUOTED GERSHON LEGMAN (WHO CLAIMS TO BE A GHOST WRITER FOR DR. FREDERICK WERTHAM, THE AUTHOR OF A RECENT SNEAK AGAINST COMICS PUBLISHED IN "THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL"), THIS SAME G. LEGMAN, IN ISSUE # 3 OF "NEURONICA" PUBLISHED IN AUTUMN 1948, BOLDLY CONDEMNED COMICS, ALTHOUGH ADMITTING THAT:

\*THE CHILD'S NATURAL CHARACTER... MUST BE DISTORTED TO FIT CIVILIZATION... FANTASY VIOLENCE WILL PARALYZE HIS RESISTANCE, DIVERT HIS AGGRESSION TO UNREAL ENEMIES AND FRUSTRATIONS, AND IN THIS WAY PREVENT HIM FROM REBELLING AGAINST PARENTS AND TEACHERS. THIS WILL SIPHON OFF HIS RESISTANCE AGAINST SOCIETY, AND PREVENT REVOLUTION.\*

- SO THE NEXT TIME SOME JOKER GETS UP AT A P.T.A. MEETING, OR STARTS JABBERING ABOUT THE "NAUGHTY COMIC BOOKS" AT YOUR LOCAL CANDY STORE, GIVE HIM THE ONCE-OVER. WE'RE NOT SAYING HE IS A COMMUNIST! HE MAY BE INNOCENT OF THE WHOLE THING! HE MAY BE A DUPE! HE MAY NOT EVEN READ THE "DAILY WORKER"! IT'S JUST THAT HE'S SWALLOWED THE RED BAIT... HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER!

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# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! PILE ABOARD THE GOOD SHIP *SARGOPHAGUS*, WE HORRIBLE HEARTIES! THE MORGUE THE MERRIER, I ALWAYS SAY! YOU REMEMBER MY DEAR COMPANION, DON'T YOU? IN CASE SOME OF YOU ARE STRANGERS... THIS IS *DRUSILLA*, HOSTESS OF THE *VAULT*! YOU'LL BE SEEING A LOT OF HER! RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, YOUR SALTY OLD *VAULT-KEEPER* IS ABOUT TO SET TALE ON A TEMPEST-TOSSED *FRIGHT-SEEING* CRUISE BY WAY OF A GANGRENOUS-YELLOW GAZETTE I DUG UP HERE IN THE SLIMY DEPTHS OF THE *VAULT*! I VOW THIS BARNACLED BIT OF SILGE WILL SHIVER YOUR TIMBERS, MATEYS, SO HITCH UP YOUR MIZZENMASTS WHILE I UNRAVEL THE CREEPY CHRONICLE I CALL...

## ANY SPORT in a STORM

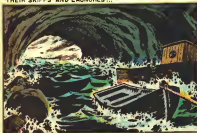




OH, BUT THE SEA WAS ANGRY THAT NIGHT! SHE WAS A SEETHING SHREW! CRASHING, FOAMING AND HISSING, SHE BEAT AGAINST THE ROCK-BOUND ISLAND SHORE. THEN SHE WOULD SLINK BACK AND CURL UP INTO HERSELF, ONLY TO COME ROARING AT THE IMMOVABLE, SILENT ROCKS AGAIN...



THEN THE SEA, IN HER RAGE, HURLED HERSELF UPON THE SHORE, THUNDERED AGAINST THE CHALKY CLIFFS, DIGGING AT THEIR BATTERED SIDES! AND SHE REACHED WITH LONG, COLD, CLAWING FINGERS INTO THE CAVES SHE'D MADE... INTO THE SMUGGLERS' CAVES, WHERE SHE TOYED WITH THEIR SKIFFS AND LAUNCHES...



THE STORM INVADIED THE INN FOR A MOMENT AS SHANNON ENTERED. THEN HE CLOSED IT OUT, CAST OFF HIS BRINE-DRENCHED COAT, AND STOOD WARMING HIS HANDS BEFORE THE FIRE.

"...T'WAS ON JUST SUCH A NIGHT ME FATHER WAS CAUGHT AT SEA THAT SHE GOT HIM!

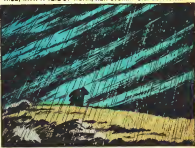


SHANNON GLARED DARKLY AS HE RECOGNIZED TIMOTHY D'ROURKE'S PIPING BROGUE...

AYE! THE SEA HAS REACHED UP WITH HER EIGHT SLIMY ARMS AND PLUCKED HIM, SCREAMIN', RIGHT OFFN THE DECK! WE NEVER SEEN HIM AGAIN... NEVER!



HIGH ABOVE, THE WIND HOWLED AS THOUGH TRYING TO DROWN OUT THE ROARING FURY OF THE SEA! IT DROVE BLACK CLOUDS BENEATH THE SKY AS THOUGH TRYING TO HIDE, WITH A VEIL OF MURK, HER STORMY DISPOSITION...



SQUATTING ON A BLEAK, WINDSWEEP HUNMCK, RATS- MOUTH INN STOOD LIKE AN OMINOUS, GREY, WEATHERED HULK. BUT THE RUGGED GIANT, LON SHANNON, FIXED HIS STEELY EYES ON THE INVITING WARMTH OF THE LIGHTS GLOWING THROUGH THE WINDOWS...



SHANNON BLASPHEMED IN A BOOM- ING VOICE, BROWLED HIS ORDER TO THE INNKEEPER, AND HIS MEN, AWARE OF HIS PRESENCE AT LAST, FELL INTO APPREHENSIVE SILENCE...

GROG, DODSON! AND MULL IT SO IT'LL BOIL MY INNARDS, OR I'LL DROWN YOU IN YOUR OWN SWILL!





THERE WAS A SNEER ON THE BIG MAN'S FACE, WITH THE STRENGTH OF HIS HARD GREY EYES ALONE HE BROUGHT THE RED-HEADED LAD TO HIS FEET...

SO THE SEA HAG GOT YOUR OLD MAN, DID SHE, O'Rourke?

AYE! THAT SHE DID, SIR! YOU HAVE ME WORD ON IT!

AND I SUPPOSE YOU HEARD FROM YOUR FATHER'S GHOST WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM...?

NO, SIR. WE HEARD IT FROM HIS BEST FRIEND, WHO'S DEAD NOW. REST HIS SOUL!

PFAY! NARY A WITNESS, YOU LYIN' LITTLE SNEAK! ONLY THE DEAD!

THEN WITH A BRUTALITY THAT MADE EVEN HIS HARD-BITTEN SMUGGLER CREW GASP, SHANNON OROVE HIS HUGE FIST AGAINST TIM O'Rourke's MOUTH...

'T'WILL BE A LONG TIME TILL YOUR ROTTEN TONGUE CAN SPEW OUT SUCH LIES AGAIN!

ARE YOU ALL GOIN' TO BE TAKEN IN BY A LIAR'S SUPERSTITIOUS BABBLING WHILE A SCHOONER WAITS A MILE OFF SHORE WITH THIRTY THOUSAND POUNDS IN SPICES, PERFUMES AND GEMS FOR US?

YE CAN SAY WHAT YE LIKE, LON SHANNON! BUT THE SEA HAG ABOUNDOS TONIGHT...AND YE'LL NOT MAKE US SET FOOT IN A BOAT! NOT TONIGHT!

GO BACK TO YE HOMES, YE SNIVELIN' PACK O' WOMEN! I'LL GO IT ALONE, THEN! AND THERE'S A FIFTY POUND BONUS FOR ANY MAN WHAT'LL STAND UP AN' JOIN ME!!

FIFTY, CHIEF? AYE, SIR... I'LL GO W' YE!

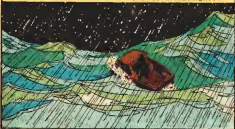
RELUCTANTLY, THE OTHER MEN AGREED TO HELP SHANNON LAUNCH A BOAT, AND A FEW MINUTES LATER, MUTTERING GARKLY, THEY LEFT THE COMFORT OF THE INN...

THERE'LL BE NO CUT FOR YOU HEATHEN COWARDS THIS TRIP! SCOLLAY AND I'LL BE GETTIN' YOUR SHARES!

THE DIRTY LITTLE SNEAK'D CRAWL THROUGH 'ADES ON 'IS BELLY FOR 'ALF A 'UNORED POUNDS, I WOULD!



WITH DIFFICULTY, THE SMUGGLERS HELPED SHANNON AND SCOLLEY PUT TO SEA IN A LAUNCH! THE ENRAGED SEA SEETHED HER DEFIANCE! SHE HEAVED AND ROLLED, TRIED IN A DOZEN DIFFERENT WAYS TO ENGULF THEM! SHE CALLED UPON THE WIND AND LIGHTNING, AS SHE DROVE HERSELF AGAINST THE ROCKS IN RENEWED BURSTS OF TEMPER... BUT SOMEHOW THE LAUNCH OUTWITTED HER...



THEN THE STORM BROKE IN ALL ITS FURY! MOUNTAINS OF WAVES TRIED TO SWALLOW THE SMALL CRAFT! THE WIND TORE, LIGHTNING MENACED, THUNDER THREATENED, BUT THE GIANT SHANNON ONLY LAUGHED!



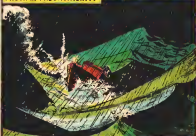
TRY YOUR THOUSAND TRICKS, YOU BILLIOUS, UGLY OLD HARRIDAN! SHOW ME YOUR SEA HAS AN' I'LL SPIT IN HER EYE!

WITH ONE POWERFUL HAND HE LIFTED THE COWERING SCOLLEY FROM THE CABIN. HIS LAUGHTER ROARED ABOVE THE WIND. SCOLLEY LAUGHED TOO... BUT ONLY WITH HIS MOUTH, FOR THE REST OF HIM WAS ALL TERROR...



WELL? WHERE IS YOUR SEA HAG WITH HER EIGHT, SLIMEY, BARNACLED ARMS, EH?! TELL HER LON SHANNON IS WAITING!?

FOR TWO HOURS THE LAUNCH WOULD VANISH IN TROUGH AFTER TROUGH, AND THE SEA WOULD CLOSE ABOUT THEM, ONLY TO HAVE THE CRAFT LEAP TANTALIZINGLY OUT OF HER GRASP! THEN SHE'D FOAM, AND HISS, AND FROTH IN FRUSTRATION...

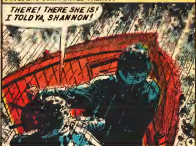


WE'RE LOST, SHANNON! IT'S THE SEA HAG! SHE'S LED US OFF COURSE! SHE TAKES A HUNDRED FORMS... SHE'S A DOLPHIN ONE MOMENT, A GRAB JUTTIN' OUT OF THE SEA, A TERN, A BULL...

OR MAYBE SHE'S THIS BOAT, YOU BLASTED LITTLE FOOL!



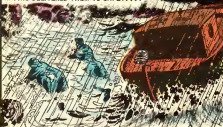
A GREAT SWELL LIFTED THE BOAT HIGH, CARRIED IT SWIFTLY FORWARD, AND SUDDENLY LOOMING OUT OF THE BLACKNESS, A HUGE, GREY, MOUNTAINOUS MASS OF BOULDERS CONFRONTED THEM...



THERE! THERE SHE IS! I TOLD YA, SHANNON!



THE SWELL SANK SWIFTLY, SPENDING ITSELF ON A SHORT, PEBBLY BEACH THAT SLOPED UP TO THE BOULDERS! THE TWO MEN WERE THROWN ROUGHLY TO THE BEACH WHERE THEY CLUNG WHILE THE RECEDING WATER SOUGHT TO DRAG THEM BACK. THE LAUNCH SETTLED QUIETLY ON THE PEBBLES, SMUGGLY SATISFIED AT HAVING DELIVERED THEM TO SAFETY...



SO THIS LITTLE CHUNK O' LAND IS YOUR SEA HAS, EH, SCOLLAY? WELL, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, I'M GLAD TO BE RESTIN' ON 'ER BOSOM!

GREAT GLORY, CHIEF! LOOK!



A LIGHTHOUSE? I DON'T REMEMBER THIS ONE!

WE BEEN CARRIED A GOOD 'UNDRED MILES OFF-COURSE, THAT'S WHY YE DON'T KNOW 'ER! AYE! A GOOD 'UNDRED... AN' NOT ENOUGH PETROL T' CARRY US MORE'N A DOZEN!



YOU'RE GOIN' UP, CHIEF? YE DON'T KNOW WHO'S UP THERE! MAYBE THE LAW...

STAY ON THE BEACH, IF YE BE AFRAID! I'M GOIN' UP T' DRY OUT... AN' T' GET A WARMIN' NIP IF THEY GOT ONE!



IN ANSWER TO SHANNON'S BOOMING FIST, THE DOOR CREAKED OPEN ON ITS SALT-CAKED HINGES...

ME NAME'S SHANNON, CAP'N! THIS HERE'S ME FRIEND SCOLLAY! THE SEA TOSSED US UP HERE! COULD WE DRY OUT FOR A BIT?

GLADLY, SIR! COME IN! MY NAME IS DANIELS!



CAPTAIN DANIELS LED THEM UP A SHORT, CIRCULAR IRON STAIRWAY AND INTO A KITCHEN WHICH WAS REDOLENT OF TANGY CHOWDER. THERE WERE TWO WOMEN, WHOM HE INTRODUCED AS HIS WIFE, AND HIS DAUGHTER HEATHER...

'TIS A RISKY BUSINESS PUTTING OUT T' SEA THIS NIGHT, MR. SHANNON! THAT YOU SURVIVED AT ALL IN A LAUNCH WAS A GREAT BIT OF LUCK!

AYE, CAP'N DANIELS! GREAT LUCK, IN DEED!





THE TWO CASTAWAYS WERE TAKEN TO A BEDROOM ON ANOTHER FLOOR WHERE THEY REMOVED THEIR SOILING CLOTHES. WRAPPED IN BLANKETS, THEY RETURNED DOWNSTAIRS...

HEATHER, BRING OUR GUESTS SOME CHOWDER NOW! AND HAVE A CARE WITH THEIR CLOTHES.

AYE, FATHER.



CAPTAIN DANIELS EAGERLY TALKED AND ASKED QUESTIONS, AS LON SHANNON, GREEDILY ADMIRING HEATHER'S BEAUTY, ANSWERED ABSENTLY. AT LAST THEIR CLOTHES WERE FULLY ORIED...

YE'LL FIND COMFORTABLE BEDS UP THERE, LABS! I KNOW YE MUST BE TIRED!

OH... A WEE BIT, CAP'N! A WEE BIT!



THEY DRESSED, AND AS SHANNON WAS ABOUT TO GO DOWNSTAIRS, SCOLLEY GRIPPED HIS ARM, LEERING...

NOW, LOOKIE, SHANNON! YE AIN'T GOIN' T' HOG THE PRETTY WENCH ALL T' YESELF, ARE YE?

YOU'D BEST BE STAYIN' UP HERE, SCOLLEY... YOU NEED REST!



WHEN SHANNON REACHED THE KITCHEN HE WAS PLEASED TO FIND HEATHER ALONE. THE CAPTAIN AND HIS WIFE HAD RETIRED. FOR A WHILE THEY TALKED, UNTIL...

'TIS GETTING LATE, I MUST BE OFF T' BED...

STAY, LASS! THERE'S THINGS I WISH T' SPEAK OFF SURELY, A BONNIE THING LIKE YOU MUST GET LONELY FOR A MAN'S COMPANY!



HIS STRONG ARMS SLIPPED TIGHTLY ABOUT HER, HELD HER CLOSE TO HIM, HIS FACE SNUGGLED CLOSE TO HERS. AS SHE LEANED BACK TRYING VAINLY TO PUSH HIM AWAY, AND SHE GASPED BREATHLESSLY...

NO... PLEASE! YE MUSTN'T DO THIS!

THE STORM OUTSIDE IS BUT A WEE THING COMPARED T' THE STORM INSIDE ME! AYE! EVER SINCE I LAID EYES ON YE, I KNEW I WANTED YE! YE KNEW IT, TOO!



YE KNEW IT AN' YET YE STAYED HERE LATE 'CAUSE YE KNEW I'D COME DOWN AGAIN! YE CAN'T ANSWER ME 'NAY'... YE WAS WAITIN' FOR ME! YE WANT ME JUST AS MUCH AS I WANT YOU, HEATHER!

OH... PLEASE, LON. LEAVE ME BE... LON... STOP.



DON'T STOP ME, HEATHER! I'LL GIVE YE ALL YE WANT IN THE WORLD! I'LL TAKE YE BACK WITH ME... T' THE MAINLAND! I'LL MAKE YE ME WIFE! I'LL GET YE PRETTY THINGS... CLOTHES, JEWELS! I WANT TO WED YE...

...LON...





IT WAS MUCH LATER WHEN LON ENTERED THE ROOM WHERE SCOLLEY WAITED...

'TIS ABOUT TIME YE GOT BACK!

STOW IT! AN' GET YE COAT! WE'RE HEADING BACK T' RATS MOUTH... TONIGHT! NOW! 'TIS ONLY TEN MILES!



TEN? THERE'S SOMETHIN' GOO ABOUT THAT! HOW IS IT WE NEVER EVEN SEEN THIS LIGHTHOUSE AFORE T'NIGHT?



I CAN'T BETHINK A ABOUT IT NOW! WE MADE IT HERE AND WE'LL MAKE IT BACK! IF I STAY TILL MORNIN', TH' CAP'N WILL HAVE ME WED TH' GIRL!

SO, WITH MUCH DIFFICULTY, THEY PUT TO SEA AGAIN! AND FROM THE START, SCOLLEY WHINED AND CRINGED LIKE A FRIGHTENED SCHOOLGIRL...

TURN BACK, CHIEF! THE SEA'S TOO ROUGH! WE'LL BE SWAMPED!

STOW IT, YE BILGE-BOOND, OR I'LL THROTTLE YE, SO HELP ME I WILL!



WE'LL NOT MAKE IT, SHANNON! TURN BACK I SAY, OR WE'LL DROWN LIKE RATS! MARK ME WORDS... THE SEA HAG IS OUT T' GET US! AN' IT'S ALL YOUR DOIN'... YOUR FAULT!

SHUT UP, I SAY, YE LOW, SNIVELIN' COWARD!



IT'S ALL AGAINST US! WE GET BEAT BY A STORM AND CHUNKED UP AT A LIGHTHOUSE WHAT DIDN'T BE THERE TILL T'NIGHT! AN' NOW 'CAUSE D' THAT GIRL AN' YE LYIN' WORDS, YE MADE US BAIT FOR THE SEA HAG!

LEGGO ME ARM! GET AWAY FROM TH' WHEEL, I SAY!



I SHOULD NEVER HA' COME WI' YE, YE BLASTED IDIOT! TURN BACK! TURN BACK! BY HEAVEN, I'LL DO IT MESELF! I'LL NOT LET YE RUN ME T' ME DEATH! GIVE ME THE HELM, OR BY HEAVEN, I'LL...

AVAST! I'VE HAD ENOUGH! YE BLASTED LITTLE PIP-SQUEAK, I'LL HAVE NO MORE OF YE!



THERE! YE'LL MAKE A TASTY TIDBIT FOR YOUR SEA HAG! IF SHE DON'T CARE WHAT SHE EATS!





THE FURIOUS SEA SWALLOWED THE LITTLE MAN IN AN INSTANT! AND THEN, EVEN ABOVE THE SHRIEKING FURY OF THE STORM, SHANNON HEARD THE VOICE...

LON...

EH?

HEATHER! YE LITTLE FOOL! WHAT ARE YE DOIN' HERE?

I FEARED YE'D LEAVE WITHOUT ME, LON! I DIDN'T GO TO MY ROOM... I CAME HERE! I HID IN THE CABIN!

LEAVE ME BE! DID YE REALLY THINK I WANTED YE WITH ME, EVEN WHEN I LEFT WITHOUT YE?!

BUT I'M HERE, LON! YE SAID YE'D TAKE ME TO THE MAINLAND! YE SAID YE'D MARRY ME!

YE BLASTED, TRUSTIN' FOOL! YE OUGHT T' KNOW BETTER THAN T' TAKE TH' WORD OF AN EXCITED MAN! MARRIAGE, IS IT? PFAH! NO, LASS! NOT FOR LON SHANNON! YE GO NO FURTHER!

I WANT YE, LON! I'LL NEVER LET YE GET AWAY FROM ME!

ANGRILY, HE STRUGGLED TO THROW HER INTO THE SEA! SUDDENLY, HER ARMS GRIPPED HIM WITH A STRENGTH HE HAD NEVER KNOWN! HE BLUNKED THE RAIN FROM HIS FACE TO SEE MORE CLEARLY, FELT OTHER ARMS GRIP HIM... FRIGHTFUL, POWERFUL ARMS, SLITHERING ABOUT HIM...

YE'LL NEVER GET AWAY FROM ME, LON!

HE FELT HIMSELF BEING PULLED TOWARD THE ANGRY, SPUMING SEA, AND HE FOUGHT HELPLESSLY TO FREE HIMSELF! DESPERATELY, HIS SCREAM SOUNDED LOUD ABOVE THE STORM... AS THE SEA HAD SLID EASILY INTO THE WATER WITH HER PRIZE!

HEH, HEH! WELL, NOT ONLY WAS SHANNON A GOOD SEAMAN, HE WAS A GOOD LUBBER, TOO. AS HEATHER WILL TESTIFY! AND SCOLLAY... SUCH A SQUARE! BUT, ACTUALLY, EVERYONE IN THE STORY WAS FOOLISH... WEREN'T THEY ALL WET? HEH! AH, ME! I GUESS THAT'S ENOUGH! THE CRYPT-KEEPER IS PATIENTLY TRYING TO BE PATIENT! HE FOLLOWS NEXT, SO TELL WE MEET LATER ON, I'LL BE SEASING YOU!

THE  
END



# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! CHASTLY GREETINGS, YOU OLD GHOULISH GLUTTONS! OOPS! NO OFFENSE INTENDED... REMEMBER, THERE'S NO *GHOU*L LIKE AN *OLD* *GHOU*L! NOW SLITHER RIGHT INTO MY CREEPY *CRYPT OF TERROR* AND LET YOUR CORPSE-COLLECTING *CRYPT-KEEPER* HORRIFY YOU WITH A HORRENDOUS HISTORY RIGHT OUT OF MY PRIVATE *SHOCK*! IT'S ABOUT TWO MONEY-MAO NOPES WHO WERE STRICTLY FROM *HUNGARY*! THEY'D HAVE DONE *ANYTHING* FOR A FAST *FORINT*! (FORINT? THAT'S *DOUGH*, SCHMOE!) I'VE NAMED THIS MAGGOTY MORSEL OF GRAVEGIGGER'S DELIGHT...

## COFFIN SPELL!





FROM THE MOMENT THEY HAD PRIED OPEN THE COFFIN-LID, AND THE DEATHLY-SWEET STENCH OF ROTTED FLESH FILLED THEIR NOSTRILS, THEY KNEW THEIR LABORS HAD BEEN WASTED. NADYI LIFTED THE PUTRESCENT REMAINS TO A SITTING POSITION, AND JANOS RAKOCZY GRUNTED WITH DISGUST...THERE WOULD BE NO PAY THIS NIGHT...

**PFAN!** THREE HOURS OF BACK-BREAKING WORK...AND WHAT WILL DR. KAROLYI PAY US FOR THIS WORM-EATEN SPECIMEN? NOT ONE FORINT!

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND ENOUGH FRESH CADAVERS TO KEEP THE DOCTOR AND HIS STUDENTS SUPPLIED, JANOS!



NEVERTHELESS, NADYI HUNA AND JANOS RAKOCZY CAREFULLY WRAPPED THE FRAGILE REMAINS AND PLACED THEM IN THEIR CART. THEY BEGAN THE JOURNEY BACK TO THE CITY OF BUDAPEST...

PERHAPS THE SKELETON WILL BRING US ENOUGH FOR A DRINK!

**PFAN!** WORK LIKE A SLAVE FOR ONE SWALLOW OF WINE!



AFTER THEY HAD ARRIVED AT THE UNIVERSITY AND DR. KAROLYI HAD SEEN WHAT THEY HAD BROUGHT, HE RAGED TILL THEY COWERED...

...IF NOT A FORINT, DOCTOR, THEN AT LEAST...

**NOTHING!** YOU HEAR? **NOTHING!**



**DOGS! FILTHY GRAVE ROBBERS!** I PAY YOU GLADLY ONE HUNDRED FORINTS FOR EACH CADAVER YOU BRING IN GOOD CONDITION! AND IF YOU TWO CANNOT SUPPLY ME, THERE ARE OTHERS WHO CAN!



IMAGINE, JANOS! A HUNDRED FORINTS FOR EACH BODY! WE HAVE TO FIND MORE...WE HAVE TO!

YES, NADYI... BUT WHERE?



JANOS AND NADYI DROVE THEIR DREARY CART FROM GRAVEYARD TO CEMETERY, WITH NO SUCCESS. WHAT RECENT BODIES HAD BEEN BURIED IN THEM, THEY HAD DUG UP AND SOLD DURING THE PAST FORTNIGHT...

LOOK, JANOS! A FRESH GRAVE! TOMORROW NIGHT THERE WILL...

**YES! TOMORROW!** BUT WHAT ABOUT TONIGHT? WE LOSE A FORTUNE IF DR. KAROLYI BUYS FROM OTHER GRAVE ROBBERS!



**HMP!** WHAT CAN HE BUY FROM THEM? THERE ARE JUST NO CADAVERS TO BE HAD, JANOS!

I KNOW! NADYI, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I'M TEMPTED TO MAKE MY OWN DEAD BODIES!







**MURDER, JANOS?**  
HAVE YOU NO  
SCRUPLES? AT  
LEAST NOW WE  
CAN TELL OUR-  
SELVES WE DO  
SOMETHING  
FOR **SCIENCE!**

**LIAR!** WE DO  
IT FOR **MONEY...**  
NOTHING ELSE! BUT  
DON'T WORRY! I  
WON'T RISK GETTING  
MY NECK IN A  
**NOOSE!**



WHY  
**THIS**  
ROAD?

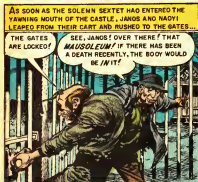
I DON'T KNOW. WE'VE  
BEEN ON ALL THE OTHERS.  
PERHAPS THERE'LL BE A  
GRAVEYARD WE HAVE NOT  
VISITED!



THEIR SPAVINED MARE WHEEZED AND  
GASPED, BUT FINALLY BROUGHT HER  
LOAD UP THE HILL TO THE GATES OF  
A CASTLE...

LOOK, NADYI!  
THOSE PEOPLE!  
THEY'RE WEARING  
**BLACK! MOURNING**  
**BLACK!**

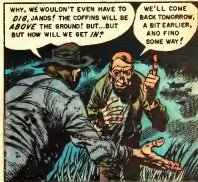
**SHHHH!** I SEE  
THEM! WE'LL  
WAIT TILL THEY  
GO INSIDE!



AS SOON AS THE SOLENN SEXTET HAD ENTERED THE  
YAWNING MOUTH OF THE CASTLE, JANOS AND NADYI  
LEAPED FROM THEIR CART AND RUSHED TO THE GATES...

THE GATES  
ARE LOCKED!

SEE, JANOS! OVER THERE! THAT  
**MAUSOLEUM!** IF THERE HAS BEEN  
A DEATH RECENTLY, THE BODY WOULD  
BE IN IT!



WHY, WE WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE TO  
**DIG, JANOS!** THE COFFINS WILL BE  
**ABOVE** THE GROUND! BUT...BUT  
BUT HOW WILL WE GET **IN?**

WE'LL COME  
BACK TOMORROW,  
A BIT EARLIER,  
AND FIND  
SOME WAY!



IT WAS JUST AFTER SUNDOWN THE NEXT EVENING WHEN  
THEY RETURNED TO THE GATES OF THE CASTLE...

LOOK, NADYI! WE'RE IN **LUCK!**  
THE GATES HAVE BEEN LEFT  
**OPEN!**

GO CAREFULLY,  
JANOS!



STEALTHILY, THE GRAVE ROBBERS CROSSED THE GRASSY  
SPACE TO THE BROODING MAUSOLEUM. NADYI TRIED THE  
DOOR...IT SLIDED BACK NOISELESSLY AT HIS TOUCH!

IT'S **UNLOCKED!** I CAN SEE  
CANDLES BURNING! THERE'S  
NOBODY INSIDE! COME ON!



THEY TIP-TOED INTO THE BIG MAUSOLEUM AND BEHELD EIGHT SHINY NEW COFFINS, THE LIGHT OF EIGHT GREAT CANDLES SHIMMERING ON THEIR VARNISHED SURFACES...

EIGHT FRESH BODIES, JANOS! I WONDER HOW SO MANY OF ONE FAMILY DIED AT ONE TIME?

A PLAQUE, PERHAPS! WHO CARES? EIGHT HUNDRED FORINTS, THAT'S WHAT MATTERS!



CAUTIOUSLY, JANOS MOVED TO THE MAUSOLEUM DOOR. NADY GRASPED HIS ARM, HIS PINCHED FACE WORRIED...

YOU'LL GET A BIGGER WAGON? YOU MEAN I AM TO STAY HERE ALONE? WHAT IF THE FAMILY SHOULD RETURN? I...

AND WHO IS TO OPEN THE GATE SHOULD THEY LOCK IT? NO, YOU MUST REMAIN HERE!



ON THE JOURNEY TO THE CITY, JANOS RAKOCZY HAD TIME FOR MANY THOUGHTS... EVIL, GREEDY THOUGHTS...

SELLING THE COFFINS IS A GOOD IDEA! BUT NADY! DOES NOT DESERVE TO SHARE IN THE PROFIT! I WILL HAVE TO ARRANGE IT, SO THAT I WILL PAY HIM ONLY FOR HELPING ME CARRY THEM!



... AND IF WE TAKE THE COFFINS WE COULD GET A THOUSAND FORINTS MORE! DO YOU THINK WE COULD DO IT?

FOR ALL THAT MONEY, WE COULD DO ANYTHING! BUT I'LL HAVE TO GET A BIGGER WAGON!



TWILIGHT FLED IN THE FACE OF THE ONCOMING NIGHT AS JANOS SNAPPED THE REINS ON THE BONY BACK OF THE AGED MARE. STARTLED OUT OF A PEACEFUL SLUMBER, SHE LURCHED FORWARD AND THE CART GROANED AFTER HER DOWN THE ROAD...



SEVERAL HOURS HAD CREPT BY BEFORE JANOS RETURNED TO THE CASTLE WITH THE LARGER WAGON. A QUARTER NOON HAD CLIMBED HIGH IN THE HEAVENS AND THE GRAVE ROBBER MOVED IN STEALTH TOWARD THE MAUSOLEUM...





HE ENTERED THE BURIAL CHAMBER. A DRAFT MADE THE EIGHT CANDLES DANCE DRUNKENLY, AND JANDS' LONG SHADOWS LEAPED ABOUT THE WALLS IN A MAD FRENZY AS HE CUPPED HIS HANDS AND WHISPERED...

NADY! NADY!  
WHERE ARE YOU?



FROM BEHIND THE FARTHEST COFFIN, NADYI ROSE SO NOISELESSLY THAT JANOS HEARD HIM ONLY WHEN HE SPOKE. JANOS WHIRLED, HIS HEART THUMPING...

...EH? OH, IT'S YOU, JANOS! ...FOOL! YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO SLEEP! YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN CAUGHT!



HURRIEOLY, JANOS FASTENED THE EIGHT COFFIN-LIOS IN PLACE...

I GOT THE WAGON, NADYI! LET'S WASTE NO TIME... TAKE HOLD OF THIS COFFIN!



TOGETHER THEY MADE THEIR WAY PAST THE DARKENED CASTLE TO THE GATES. THERE WAS NO SOUND SAVE THE HIGH-PITCHED SQUEAL OF BATS SOARING OVERHEAD...



THEY WORKED QUICKLY, SILENTLY... STILL, AN HOUR PASSED BEFORE THE LAST COFFIN WAS STACKED...

AGH! TOMORROW OUR BONES WILL ACHIE, MY FRIEND!

LET US GET AWAY FROM THIS PLACE!



IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER FOR THE MARE GOING DOWNHILL, BUT BECAUSE OF HER HEAVY LOAD SHE HAD TO BRACE HERSELF LEST THE WAGON SEND HER SKITTERING OUT OF CONTROL! JANOS SPOKE...

NADY!...I...I AM GOING TO PAY YOU ONLY FOR HELPING ME CARRY THE COFFINS! YOU DO NOT WISH TO ARGUE, EH?

WHATEVER YOU SAY, JANOS!



JANOS WAS SURPRISED... AND DISTURBED... BY NADYI'S QUIET ACCEPTANCE OF HIS PLAN! HE HAD EXPECTED AN ARGUMENT... PERHAPS A FIGHT... BUT THIS ACTION SO FOREIGN TO NADYI'S NATURE FRIGHTENED HIM...

HA! I WAS ONLY JOKING! YOU'LL GET YOUR FAIR SHARE... FIFTY-FIFTY! HA!

ANYTHING YOU SAY, JANOS!





THEY RUMBLER OVER THE BUMPY ROAD IN SILENCE...UNTIL THEY CAME TO A FORK. THEN JANDS SAT UP...

HEY! YOU'RE TAKING THE WRONG ROAD! THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO THE UNIVERSITY!

WE CAN'T DRIVE THROUGH BUDAPEST WITH A WAGONLOAD OF COFFINS, JANOS! A POLICEMAN MIGHT SEE US!



WE'LL LEAVE THE COFFINS AT OUR PLACE!

YOU'RE RIGHT! THEN WE'LL PUT THE BODIES IN OUR CART AND GO TO VISIT DR. KARDLY!



THEY REACHED THEIR DILAPIDATED HUT AND UNLOADED THE WAGON...

IMAGINE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE WHEN HE SEES THEM! EIGHT NEW BODIES! AND EIGHT HUNDRED FORINTS FOR US, EH, NADYI?



ONE BY ONE THE COFFINS WERE BROUGHT INTO THE Hovel AND PLACED ON THE FLOOR. JANDS WAS IN HIGH SPIRITS BECAUSE OF THEIR SUCCESSFUL VENTURE!

AH! THIS IS THE LAST ONE! DR. KARDLY! WON'T HIRE OTHER GRAVE ROBBERS AFTER THIS, EH?



WITH A HEAVY SIGH, JANOS SAT DOWN ON A ROUGH WOODEN CHAIR, TILTED IT BACK AGAINST THE WALL AND, WITH AN AIR OF LUXURY, LIGHTED HIS OLD, FOUL-SMELLING PIPE. NADYI SAT NEARBY, HIS HEAD NODDING...

I'M VERY TIRED...

THERE IS NO HURRY, WE'VE EARNED A REST!



IT WAS NOT A NOISE, BUT RATHER SOME INSTINCT THAT DREW JANDS' EYES TO THE COFFINS. WHAT HE SAW THERE ROBBED HIM OF HIS VOICE! HIS PIPE DROPPED FROM HIS GAPPING, DILVERING LIPS...



SUDDENLY, FEAR OVERCAME SHOCK! HE JUMPED UP, GRABBED NADYI BY THE ARM, AND POINTED A TREMBLING FINGER...

NADYI! THE COFFINS! LOOK AT THE COFFINS!





EIGHT PAIRS OF COLO, CLAMMY HANDS LIFTED EIGHT COFFIN-LIDS! EIGHT BOOKIES, SWATHED IN BLACK, ROSE FROM EIGHT COFFINS, EIGHT OATHLY PALE VAMPIRES, THIRSTING FOR WARM, HUMAN BLOOD, TURNED BEADY, GLITTERING EYES ON JANOS WHO STOOD TRANSFIXED! IT WAS NADY! WHO BROKE THE SPELL...



JANOS! QUICK! THIS WAY!

JANOS GALVANIZED INTO ACTION! THEY FLED INTO THE WINDOWLESS ROOM...

SHUT THE DOOR, NADY!  
BOLT IT!



VAMPIRES! DO YOU KNOW ABOUT VAMPIRES, NADY? THEY DRAIN YOUR BLOOD... AND THEIR BITE TURNS A MAN INTO A VAMPIRE, TOO!

I KNOW, JANOS! I FOUND THAT OUT BEFORE... WHEN YOU WENT TO GET THE WAGON!



EH? WHA...? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I... I FOUND OUT ABOUT THE BLOOD-DRAINING AND THE BITES, JANOS... IN THE MAUSOLEUM! THEY CAUGHT ME!



WHA? NADY! YOU MEAN YOU...  
AAAAGGH!

YES, JANOS! I'M A VAMPIRE NOW! AND SOON YOU WILL BE TOO!



-THE  
END-

HEH, HEH! THERE YOU HAVE IT, LITTLE KIDDIES! NO WONDER NADY! BOY LOST INTEREST IN MONEY... ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS PUT THE BITE ON JANOS! HEH! AND WITH THAT THOUGHT I GIVE YOU INTO THE CLAMMY HANDS OF V.K. FOR SAFEKEEPING (?) UNTIL NEXT WE MEET IN O.W.'S MAG, THE HAUNT OF FEAR!







## PINCH!



From the stern of the little lobster boat, Borley watched Captain Pritchard through narrowed eyes. While the boat churned in the rough water, like a chip of wood caught in a whirlpool, Borley went over his plan for the last time. That fool Pritchard had left him no choice: by catching Borley in the act of rifling his wallet, then swearing he'd bring him back so that harbor police could pinch Borley for robbery, Pritchard had sealed his own death warrant. For how could the port-bellied skipper know that his one-man crew was a three-time loser? That one more arrest meant the rest of his life behind granite walls, for Borley?

Even as he stepped forward cat-quick, the spike gripped in his hamlike hand, Borley thought elatedly of the holdful of lobsters down below. Even as he slashed out the heavy steel rod, Borley was estimating how much the lobster catch would bring when he docked.

The spike fell with shattering force. It was the work of a minute to lug the blood-spattered corpse to the rail and hurl it over the side.

"So long, Cap Pritchard," Borley howled. "Now the boat's *mine* and the lobsters downstairs belong to ME! And you . . . you fat little pig . . . you're nothing but food for the fish!"

Borley swigged from the half-empty bottle beside the wheel, his face creased in a joyous grimace. *I'll dock the boat, sell the lobsters and skedaddle*, he thought. *And if anyone's nosey about the Cap, I'll tell 'em I left of Pritchard on Corcas Island, the far side of the lobster grounds. Belly-ache, I'll tell 'em. Pritchard wanted me to bring in the catch, then come back for 'im later!*

Intriguing sums of money began to swirl through Borley's brain . . . exactly how much,

in dollars and cents, would he get for those razor-clawed devils down in the hold? He began to twitch and sweat in a panic of anxiety; for long minutes he held out but, finally, he could stand the suspense no longer. Lashing the wheel dead-ahead, he pulled back the hatch cover and peered down into the darkness of the hold. *Must be a thousand of them dirty green monsters down there*, he gloated, *swarming over one another like a bunch of ants!* Borley bent lower to see better in the eerie half light, and his foot slid on the slick wood. With a roar, he plunged forward. And downward.

Landing amidst the wet, writhing mass, he felt it yield as he sank into the hideous muck of smashed lobsters. His brain screamed for him to squirm free, but there was nothing to grip . . . nothing he could use to pull himself out of this stinking inferno.

They were on him now, scuttling across his body in seething slithery hordes. Their beady little eyes swiveled and glared at him, their wand-like antennae twitched like radar bombsights zeroing in for the kill. Borley shrieked and thrashed frantically. But it was too late. A hundred slimy green claws were probing his body . . . crunching his flesh between pincers strong and deadly as steel. Borley was aware of his skin being ripped by those relentless claws, of blood gushing from severed arteries in his wrists, legs and throat. And his last thought, before unconsciousness engulfed him in a spasm of red-hot agony, was something he'd heard someone say . . . sometime . . . somewhere . . .

Vaguely, as the life was crushed out of his tortured body, the echo of distant words clicked through Borley's brain: . . . *fat little pig . . . nothing . . . but . . . food for the fish . . .*



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**\* (SO WHO'S GONNA FOOT THE BILL FOR THE BULLETINS, US/P? SURE WE HAD TO RAISE THE PRICE! SO SURE WE!)**

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225 LAFAYETTE STREET  
NEW YORK, 12, N.Y.

So here's my 50¢! So I could've joined for half the price a couple of months back! So now I get a bulletin subscription. So who says I want it. So I'm a sucker. So put me down and send me the stuff what the kid's wearing and the bulletin I don't want but I'm paying for...

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**\* (NO 25¢ MEMBERSHIP WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER JUNE 4, 1954)**



# THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! Let's get right into this one... lots of mail and stuff...

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I think your so-called "comics" are terrible! They put the wrong things in the minds of children. If you ask me, they ought to be banned! Especially E.C.'s!

Michael Vecchio  
Southwick, Mass.

P.S. I really think E.C.'s are real gone, but to say you don't like 'em is the best way to get your letter printed!

Worked, didn't it, ya little monster!—V.K.

... As a high-school kid in Honolulu, we used to sing this song about our English teacher named Miss German (to the tune of "My Bonnie"):

Miss German has tuberculosis  
Miss German has only one lung  
Miss German spits blood by the buckets  
And dries it and chews it like gum (yum, yum)!

Rhoda Phillips  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Kids are much the same Stateside, Rhoda... only worse!—V.K.

... Every time I read one of your boys I get sick. I think I'm about one of the sickest boys in California!

Ron Montana  
Mt. View, Calif.

... Little Willie was no bore

He nailed his sister to the door  
His mother cried out kind of faint  
"Willie... don't you scratch the paint!"

Ronald Merlo  
W. New York, N.Y.

This kid doesn't even know what state he lives in!—V.K.

... My little brain has come up with a stinging idea. Take snapshots of the artists and editors at E.C., have them sign the pictures like you and the other Ghoul-Lunatics once did, and then you can sell them. Just imagine, autographed snapshots of all the gang at E.C.—not perhaps a group picture suitable for framing. What do you think?

Jim Hannah  
Bradley, Ill.

What do I think? I think it stinks... but as soon as my idiot editors read your letter, they started figuring how much money they could make, so I gotta ask you readers what YOU think! Write in and let me know if you'd be interested! (Say "No."!)—V.K.

... I ran into a ghoul one day  
His flesh was white as snow,  
And everywhere a dead man was  
This ghoul was sure to go  
For he is forced to hunt and prey!  
Else he cannot survive  
He always brings his meat back dead  
And never back alive!

Fan-Addict Donna Bowers  
Pensacola, Fla.

... I am an E.C. Fan-Addict Club member who has pen-pals in various parts of the world. Whenever I get the chance, I send them issues of "The Vault of Horror." They are simply crazy about them and keep asking for new issues. I think this is a wonderful way of spreading Horror (E.C. style, that is) throughout the world.

Joseph Wagner, Jr.  
Trenton, N.J.

... The other day, a friend gave me a magazine of yours which I enjoyed very much. I can truthfully say it was the best horror magazine I have ever read. I would very much like a boy and a girl Fan Pal, age about 15 to 17 years, 10 months myself.

Margaret Anne Conner  
28 Poutley Road West  
Glasgow, S.W.I.

... Slowly the jury files into the room

Very soon I shall know my doom  
Before the foreman the verdict doth bring  
He asks me what I have to say.

"Have mercy," I cry on bended knees  
Though the mag I read was not E.C.'s  
Its art was sloppy and the plots made me sick:  
I was just testing being a non-Fan-Addict!  
Now my head is pierced with an iron hook  
And to the beheading path I'm took

And made to read imitations that smell  
Until I rot and go to... the dogs!

S. Schwartzberg  
E.C. Fan-Addict No. 4183

I like your magazines very much. I think your magazine writers put more effort and thinking into each story. I think you are one of the world's most handsome men, although I have to admit you look a little like women.

Judy Ford  
Bowers Beach, Del.

No comment... if I said what's in my mind, we'd be banned!—V.K.

... Billy, in one of his nice new ashes,  
Fell into the grate and was burnt to ashes  
Now, although the room grows chilly,  
I haven't the heart to poke up Billy.

John Stanley  
Napoli, Calif.

Before winding up, the commercials. Note (preceding page) that the price of the E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB has gone up! Used to be a quarter... now half-a-buck! Business recession, so my idiot editors raise the price... but you do get the Bulletin free now! (Still not worth it!) But if you have 50¢ you're not using, why not send it in. I'm sure THEY can use it! And subscriptions... eight issues for a buck... only 20¢ more than newsstand price! Well, the address for subs, fan-mail, etc. is:

The Vault-Keeper  
Room 706, Dept. 38  
225 Lafayette Street  
N.Y. 12, N.Y.



HEH, HEH! YOU MORBID MEATBALLS WANT MORE, EH?  
OKAY, THEN...HERE'S A SUBTERRANEAN SAGA I CALL...

# The CATACOMBS



PIETRO NIUTA...

...GRABBED THE SACK  
WITH ITS LOAD OF  
SILVER...



...AND, WITH GINO ALCARI  
FOLLOWING...



...BROKE FOR THE FRONT DOOR!



AS THE FRIGHTENED PAIR  
FLEO DOWN THE STREET, THE  
STARTLED CRIES OF THE  
ROBBED OLD MAN SHAT-  
TERED THE STILLNESS, THEN  
DRIFTED OFF INTO THE SILENT  
DARKNESS...





GINO AND PIETRO VANISHED INTO THE NIGHT, DOWN NARROW STREETS AND LITTERED ALLEYS TILL THEY REACHED A BLEAK LITTLE FLAT IN THE SLUMS...



GLEEFULLY, GINO REACHED INTO A CABINET FOR A BOTTLE OF WINE.

"BUT IT IS MORE THAN 'HAH!' BY SILVER! IT IS *ANTIQUE!* SOME RICH AMERICAN MAY PAY AS HIGH AS *SIX THOUSAND!*"

"HAH! BY HEAVEN, THIS CALLS FOR A DRINK!"



THEY DRANK GREEGLY OF THE CHEAP RED WINE THEN, SUDDENLY, PIETRO SPAT OUT A MOUTHFUL OF THE LIQUID.



INSTANTLY, GINO WHIRLED TOWARD THE DOOR, KNOCKING HIS CHAIR TO THE FLOOR IN HIS HASTE! HIS FACE WAS CONTORTED WITH A MIXTURE OF BOTH FEAR AND ANGER...



GINO PALED. HIS HANDS CLENCHED AND UNCLENCHED NERVOUSLY AS HE RIGHTED HIS CHAIR...

"WHAT... WHAT CAN WE DO? WE JUST CAN'T THROW IT *AWAY*...NOT AFTER THE CHANCES WE TOOK *GETTING* IT, PIETRO!"

"I DON'T KNOW. WE'LL HAVE TO *HIDE* IT, I GUESS! BUT *WHERE?*"



TOGETHER, THEIR BROWS KNITTED IN CONCENTRATION, THEY SAT MULLING OVER THIS NEW PROBLEM.



"I AM THINKING! AH! I HAVE IT, GINO! THE *CATACOMBS!*"



"THE...CATACOMBS? I... I DON'T LIKE TO GO THERE! IT'S SCARY...AND COLO... AND SO *DARK!*"



WE WON'T HAVE TO STAY... JUST HIDE THE SILVER TILL IT'S FORGOTTEN ABOUT! WE'LL TAKE A LANTERN, MY FRIEND, AND WINE TO WARM US... *PLENTY OF WINE!*





THE SUN HAD NOT YET RISEN WHEN THE TWO THIEVES REACHED THE CATACOMBS ENTRANCE. PIETRO CARRIED THE SACK OF SILVER AND THE LANTERN, WHILE GINO, TREMBLING IN THE DAMP MORNING AIR, CLUTCHED SEVERAL BOTTLES OF RED WINE IN HIS ARMS...

"I DON'T LIKE THIS, PIETRO! I DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL!"

"FOOL! WOULD YOU RATHER SPEND TEN YEARS BEHIND BARS?!"



THEY LOOKED APPREHENSIVELY INTO THE BLACK OPENING...

"I'VE HEARD A MAN COULD GET LOST IN THERE. WOULD YOU KNOW THE WAY OUT AGAIN?"

"I'M NOT SURE... IF THERE WAS SOMETHING WITH WHICH TO MARK A TRAIL..."



PIETRO SUDDENLY GRINNED, SNATCHED A BOTTLE FROM GINO'S ARM AND BROKE OFF ITS NECK...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WE'LL LEAVE A TRAIL OF RED WINE, GINO... SOMETHING WE CAN FOLLOW BACK!



GINGERLY, THEY STEPPED INTO THE DARK, MUSTY PASSAGE...

MAKE IT A THIN TRAIL, SO THERE'LL BE ENOUGH TO LAST!

I'LL BE SURE THERE'S ENOUGH LEFT TO DRINK, PIETRO!



THEY MOVED SLOWLY, AIMLESSLY, THROUGH THE DARK GLOOM OF MYRIAD PASSAGES... NOW TO THE RIGHT, THEN LEFT, RIGHT, AND DOWN TO ANOTHER LEVEL...

HOW MUCH FURTHER?

THE DEEPER IN WE GO, THE LESS CHANCE OF OUR LOOT BEING DISCOVERED, GINO!



THEY CONTINUED ON, DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE MAZE OF TUNNELS, AS GINO DRIBBLED THE WINE ONTO THE GRAY DUST UNTIL THERE WAS LITTLE LEFT...

... STOP NOW, PIETRO! I WANT TO DRINK THE REST... I'M CHILLED TO THE MARROW!

NO... A LITTLE FURTHER! JUST THINK... WE'LL SELL THE SILVER IN A MONTH OR SO, AND YOU'LL HAVE ALL THE WINE YOU CAN DRINK!



AT PIETRO'S URGING, THEY WENT ON UNTIL THEY CAME TO A CHAMBER LARGER THAN THE REST. GINO FOLLOWED THE LANTERN BEAM, THEN GRABBED HIS FRIEND'S ARM. HIS STARTLED CRY ECHOED THROUGH THE VAST LABYRINTH...

"LOOK! THERE IN THE WALL!"







AS GINO LOOKED ABOUT AND SHUDDERED, PIETRO DELIBERATELY DUMPED THE SACK OF SILVER ON THE STONE FLOOR...



THE LOUD METALLIC CLATTER SHATTERED THE SILENCE! GINO JUMPED AND TURNED, HIS FACE ASHEN IN FRIGHT...



NERVOUSLY, GINO BENT TO GATHER UP THE SILVER, AND AS HE DID, PIETRO SLIPPED A SWITCHKNIFE FROM HIS POCKET. HE FLICKED OPEN A LONG, SCALPEL-SHARP BLADE...



THE 'CLICK' OF THE BLADE BEING OPENED MADE GINO TURN IN TIME TO SEE THE CRUEL, GREEDY LOOK ON PIETRO'S FACE...IN TIME TO SEE THE BLADE FLASH UP...



DESPERATELY, GINO TRIED TO BRUSH PAST PIETRO... TRIED VAINLY TO DODGE THE VICIOUS BLADE WHICH FLASHED DOWN, PLUNGED TO THE HILT IN HIS BACK...





SCREAMING IN BITTER AGONY, GINO THRASHED TO HIS FEET AND BLINDLY STUMBLED OFF INTO THE PASSAGEWAY...



"GO AHEAD! RUN!  
YOU WON'T LIVE  
ONE MINUTE!"



AS GINO'S STUMBLING FOOTSTEPS AND STRANGLING SOBS FADED INTO THE BLACK DISTANCE, THE TREACHEROUS PIETRO SET ABOUT GATHERING THE SCATTERED SILVER...



CHUCKLING, HE SLUNG THE SACK OVER HIS SHOULDER AND LEFT THE CHAMBER...

"BY THE TIME THEY FIND HIS BODY... IF THEY EVER DO... THERE'LL BE NO TELLING IT FROM THE OTHER MUMMIES!"



HE WALKED ON, SHARPLY SCANNING THE FLOOR BY THE LANTERN GLOW...

"HEY! I'VE GONE MORE THAN FIFTY FEET! I SHOULD HAVE FOUND THE TRAIL OF WINE BY NOW!"



HE STOPPED, THEN RETURNED TO THE CHAMBER, AND WITH HIS FACE REVEALING DEEP ANXIETY, HE TRIED ONE PASSAGE, THEN ANOTHER...



AGAIN HE WAS UNABLE TO PICK UP THE TRAIL, AND HE RETURNED TO THE CHAMBER ONCE MORE TO TRY STILL ANOTHER PASSAGE! IN THE WANING LANTERN LIGHT, HE BECAME ALMOST FRENZIED... AND THEN...



SKITTISHLY, PIETRO HURRIED THROUGH THE ENDLESS MAZE OF VAULTS AND GALLERIES, HIS BREATHING HEAVY NOW, HIS FOOTFALLS ECHOING ALL ABOUT HIM...

"HOW GOOD IT WILL BE TO BREATHE FRESH AIR AGAIN... AND SEE THE SUNLIGHT!"





HE FOLLOWED THE THIN TRAIL TO ITS END...BUT IT DID NOT END AS IT SHOULD HAVE! PIETRO STOPPED DEAD IN HIS TRACKS AT THE YAWNING MOUTH OF THE PASSAGE, GAPPED INTO A BURIAL CHAMBER AND CHOKED BACK A CRY OF HORROR...



SLOWLY, UNBELIEVINGLY, PIETRO MOVED TO THE BLOODLESS BODY LYING IN THE CHAMBER'S DUST, AND WHILE ALL AROUND THE EMPTY-SOCKETED EYES GAPPED DOWN ON HIM, HE RAISED THE LIFELESS FORM AND PLEADED...

"GINO...LISTEN TO ME, GINO! I'M SORRY...GINO, I'M SORRY! WE CAN FIND OUR WAY OUT...TOGETHER. COME, I'LL HELP YOU UP...PLEASE, GINO...THE LANTERN'S GETTING DIM..."



"HURRY, GINO...WE MUST FIND THE RIGHT TRAIL BEFORE THE LANTERN GOES OUT! HEH...HEH...I...THOUGHT YOUR BLOOD WAS THE TRAIL..."

"HEH...I THOUGHT IT WAS THE WINE TRAIL...IT WAS YOUR BLOOD! GINO...THE LIGHT IS FADING! FIND THE RIGHT TRAIL FOR US...HURRY, GINO! HURRY!"

"WHEN WE GET OUT, WE'LL BE FRIENDS AGAIN, EH? GINO, HURRY! EH...EH... HURRY! EH...THE LIGHT, GINO...YOU CAN FIND THE TRAIL, CAN'T YOU, GINO? EH...EH...GINO? GINO?"



...AND THEN...



...THE LIGHT WENT OUT!



HEH, HEH! CRAZY, MIXED-UP KILLER! THAT'S WHAT HE DESERVES FOR STABBING HIS BEST FRIEND IN THE BACK, DOWN THERE! SUCH A NASTY THING TO DO! HEH...SHOULD'VE WAITED TILL THEY WERE OUTSIDE! HEH, HEH, HEH! WELL, THE CREEPY OLD

WITCH IS WAITING FOR YOU, SO GOODBYE!



THE  
END



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! WELL, HERE WE ARE AGAIN AT THE *TALE* END OF *VK'S MAG*, AND IF YOU GLOOMGRABBERS STILL DON'T HAVE YOUR GUTS FULL OF GRUESOME GORE, YOUR *OLD WITCH* HAS COOKED UP A CHARRED CHUNK OF CHILLING CHAFF THAT IS GUARANTEED TO GLUT EVEN THE GREEDIEST OF GHOULS! SO HOBBLE ON INTO MY HORRIBLE *HAUNT* WHILE I YAMMER AWAY AT A CLAMMY LITTLE CONCOCTION CALLED...

## OUT of SIGHT...





MUTTERING OMNISCIOUSLY, THE THUNDERSTORM MOVED ON, LEAVING THE TENT HUMID, HEAVY WITH THE STINKING SWEAT OF THE CROWD AND THE NAUSEATING AROMA OF KEROSENE LAMPS. FOR THE THOUSANDTH TIME CLYDE EVANS LISTENED TO THE BARKER'S CRUDE, GRAVELLY VOICE INTRODUCE HIS ACT, AND HE SWUNG HIS ANCIENT TOP HAT IN A SWOOPING ARC AND BOWED TO THE LOUDEST AUDIENCE...



...AND NOW, FOR YOUR PLEASURE, WE PRESENT THAT MYSTERIOUS MENTAL MARVEL... THE ONE, THE ONLY... THE GREAT BRAIN!

THEN THE GREAT BRAIN INTRODUCED HIS ASSISTANT WITH A WELL-WORN QUIP...

FRIENDS, THIS IS MY HELPER... **BIRD BRAIN BENNY!** HE'S STRONG AS AN OX... AND ALMOST AS SMART! BENNY WILL PASS AMONG YOU, SHOW HIM AN OBJECT... ANY OBJECT, AND I'LL TRY TO IDENTIFY IT... **BLIND-FOLDED!**



THE YOKELS DIDN'T EVEN SMILE. CLYDE WHIPPED OUT A KERCHIEF AND TIED IT OVER HIS EYES...

DON'T BE BASHFUL, FOLKS! SHOW BENNY ANYTHING... A GOOD- LUCK CHARM... A PHOTOGRAPH... IT'S ALL FREE, FOLKS!



BENNY'S TIP-OFF WORDS WERE A TIME-WORN GIMMICK WHICH THE GREAT BRAIN HID WITH A QUICK RESPONSE...

THE OBJECT YOU ARE HOLDING IS... **A KEY!**



NO MURMUR OF APPROVAL FROM THE AUDIENCE... NOT A SINGLE CLAPPING OF HANDS. BENNY SHUFFLED ON TO ANOTHER MAN...

I'M HOLDIN' UP... DUN IS SOMETHIN' BELONGIN' TO A GENT!



THAT OBJECT, MY FRIENDS, IS A **BELT!**

THE SOUND OF DERISIVE SNICKERS REACHED THE EARS OF THE GREAT BRAIN! FROM PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES HE KNEW THAT THEIR SIGNALS HAD GONE ASKEW! FURIOUS, HE WHIPPED OFF HIS BLINDFOLD...

THAT AIN'T RIGHT, BOSS! UH... IT'S UH... UH... **A WALLET!**



BUT THERE WAS AN ANSWER FOR EVERYTHING, AND THE GREAT BRAIN QUICKLY COMPOSED HIMSELF, SPOKE IN A VOICE THAT DRIPPED HEAVILY WITH STINGING SARCASTIC...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, SURELY YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO READ MY HELPER'S MIND... HE JUST **DOESN'T HAVE A MIND!** BUT NOW... IF ANYONE HAS A PERSONAL PROBLEM, I SHALL BE HAPPY TO HELP... FOR A SMALL FEE...





THE GREAT BRAIN'S AUDIENCE SLOWLY TURNED AND SILENTLY STRAGGLED OUT OF THE TENT, NOT ONE REMAINED TO LET HIM EARN HIS SMALL FEE. THE ENRAGED MENTAL MARVEL STALKED FROM THE PLATFORM...

BENNY! COME WITH ME!



BENNY HEINTZ KNEW THAT RING IN THE BRAIN'S VOICE, AND HE FOLLOWED HIM TO A SMALLER TENT, CRINGING LIKE A FRIGHTENED CUR...

I DONE SOMETHIN' WRONG, MORON! I'VE TOLD YOU A BRAIN? UH..YUH QON'T GIMME NO CHANCE TO FINISH TALKIN'...

MORON! I'VE TOLD YOU A HUNDRED TIMES... "I'M HOLDING UP" MEANS A BELT! A BELT! YOU MORON!



DON'T CALL ME THAT, MR. EVANS. I DON'T LIKE YOU CALLIN' ME THAT!

NOT ONE SUCKER STAYED, BECAUSE OF YOU! NOT ONE CENT HAVE I TAKEN IN! YOU STUPID LOUT!



CLYDE'S TEMPER EXPLODED WITH AN ENDLESS LINE OF FOUL OATHS! AGAIN AND AGAIN HIS HEAVY CANE HISSSED DOWN ON BENNY'S TORTURED BACK!

MORON! MORON! MORON!

UNGH...



WHEN CLYDE STOPPED, IT WAS ONLY FROM EXHAUSTION. SLOWLY BENNY ROSE TO HIS FEET, HIS APELIKE ARMS DANGLING... AND HE SPOKE THROUGH SWOLLEN LIPS...

I'M GONNA KILL YOU, MR. EVANS...

GET OUT OF HERE, BENNY!



THE USUAL AUTHORITY WAS LACKING FROM CLYDE'S VOICE. HE RAISED HIS CANE IN OFFENSE ONLY TO HAVE IT SNATCHED FROM HIS GRASP! THE BULL-LIKE BENNY SNAPPED THE THICK SHAFT AS IF IT WERE A TOY AND HURLED IT ASIDE...

I'M GONNA KILL YOU!

NO, BENNY...LISTEN...



DESPERATELY, THE GREAT BRAIN DOODLED ASIDE AS BENNY LUNGED FOR HIM! THE SIMPLE BRUTE GRABBED CLUMSILY AT EMPTY AIR AND FELL FORWARD ONTO THE TABLE!

OOOOF! SURE, BENNY, KILL ME! THEN WHO WILL FEED YOU? WHO'LL TAKE YOU IN AND GIVE YOU WORK? KILL ME, BENNY... THEN GO BACK TO YOUR GUTTER AND STARVE!

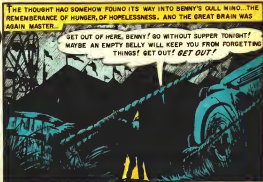






COME ON, BENNY...  
YOU'RE STRONG!  
YOU CAN DO IT!  
KILL ME! KILL  
ME!

I... OOH... I DON'T  
MEAN THAT, MR.  
EVANS! HONEST,  
MR. EVANS... I...  
UH... I WOULDN'T DO  
NOTHIN' TO HURT  
YOU!



HE THOUGHT HAD SOMEHOW FOUND ITS WAY INTO BENNY'S GULL MIND... THE  
REMEMBRANCE OF HUNGER, OF HOPELESSNESS, AND THE GREAT BRAIN WAS  
AGAIN MASTER.

GET OUT OF HERE, BENNY! GO WITHOUT SUPPER TONIGHT!  
MAYBE AN EMPTY BELLY WILL KEEP YOU FROM FORGETTING  
THINGS! GET OUT! GET OUT!

BRUISED, DAZED,  
HIS GREAT  
MUSCLES THROB-  
BING, BENNY  
STUMBLED OUT  
INTO THE STIFLING  
NIGHT, ALONG  
THE CROWDED  
MIDWAY. GUIDED  
BY THE GARISH  
THUMPING OF A  
TON-TOM AND AN  
OFF-KEY GUITAR,  
HIS DRAGGING,  
SHUFFLING FEET  
CARRIED HIM TO  
THE ONLY ONE  
WHO UNDER-  
STOOD... THE  
ONLY ONE WHO  
REALLY CARED...

...SHE SHAKES, SHE SHIMMIES! AND THAT'S NOT ALL...  
FOLKS! HULDA PUTS ON A COMPLETE HALF-HOUR SHOW  
STARTING IN JUST TEN MINUTES, FOLKS. SO STEP RIGHT  
UP AND BUY YOUR TICKETS! TWENTY-FIVE CENTS...  
ONLY TWO BITS...



PAINTFULLY, HE MOVED PAST THE BARRI-  
CENT TO A SMALLER DRESSING-ROOM  
TENT JUST BEHIND IT. HE STEPPED  
INSIDE, PLOPPED HIS HUGE BULK DOWN  
ON A DILAPIDATED CHAIR, LISTENING  
TO THE CAT-CALLS AND WHISTLES  
THAT WERE GREETING HULDA. HE  
RESTED... AND WAITED...



YES, HULDA LARSON CARED. SHE COULD MAKE BENNY  
REALIZE HE'D BEEN ABUSED... COULD MAKE HIM WEEP WITH  
SELF-PITY. SHE RETURNED WHEN HER ACT WAS OVER...

YA BIG GOOF! HOW LONG YA  
GONNA LET CLYDE EVANS GET  
AWAY WITH PUSHIN' YA ALL  
OVER THE PLACE?

AW... I GET MAD, HULDA...  
OHH... BUT WHEN I THINK  
HOW BAD IT WAS BEFORE  
HE GIVE ME FOOD... AND  
A PLACE TO SLEEP...



BUT CLYDE HAD EXPECTED THIS. HE KNEW ABOUT HULDA  
AND BENNY... ABOUT THE THOUGHTS SHE PUT IN HIS HEAD...

HE'S NOT DOIN' YA ANY FAVOR, BENNY!  
HE'D BE PAYING TWENTY DOLLARS A  
WEEK FOR A REGULAR ASSISTANT!







MR. EVANS! YA GOT NO RIGHT CALLING ME NAMES!



YOU'RE LYING, MR. EVANS! THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANYTHING WRONG BETWEEN BENNY AND ME!

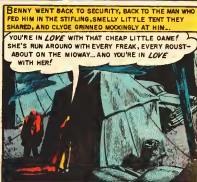


SHE'S NO GOOD FOR YOU, BENNY! NOW GET BACK TO MY QUARTERS AT ONCE, OR DON'T EVER COME BACK AT ALL!



MAYBE YOU WON'T BE HERE LONG YOURSELF! MAYBE I'LL HAVE A TALK WITH MR. TRUMBULL!

NO! UH... I'LL STAY WITH YOU, MR. EVANS!

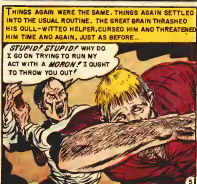


YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH THAT CHEAP LITTLE DAME! SHE'S RUN AROUND WITH EVERY FREAK, EVERY ROUSTABOUT ON THE MIDWAY...AND YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH HER!



LOVE...UH... I'M IN LOVE...

GET THIS THROUGH YOUR THICK HEAD, BENNY...KEEP AWAY FROM HER!



STUPID! STUPID! WHY DO I GO ON TRYING TO RUN MY ACT WITH A MORON? I OUGHT TO THROW YOU OUT!



AND AS BEFORE, BENNY FORGOT CLYDE'S WARNING. HE WOULD GO TO HULDA FOR SYMPATHY, AND LET HER BATHE HIS SWOLLEN FACE...



MR. EVANS TELLS YOU THAT SO YOU'LL BE AFRAID TO LEAVE HIM! HE'S A LIAR, BENNY! HE'S A ROTTEN LIAR!



HE SAYS YOU LOVE THE FREAKS, HULDA!

THAT'S A LIE, BENNY! I NEVER DID THAT! I TOLD YA CLYDE EVANS IS A LIAR!

HULDA... DUH... HULDA, I LOVE YOU, HULDA!



THERE WAS SUDDENLY A WARM, INTIMATE SILENCE IN THE SHABBY TENT. FOR A LONG MOMENT THEY GAZED AT ONE ANOTHER, HULDA'S EYES SWIMMING IN MISTY TEARS THAT FINALLY OVERFLOWED AND TRICKLED DOWN HER CHEEK...

DH, BENNY... I LOVE YOU TOO, DARLING!

I'M HAPPY, HULDA... DUH... YOU ALWAYS MAKE BENNY HAPPY!



SOME HOURS LATER, BENNY RETURNED TO THE GREAT BRAIN'S TENT. AS USUAL, CLYDE WAS FURIOUS...



I DON'T CARE WHAT SHE SAID! I WANT YOU TO KEEP AWAY FROM HER! SHE'S NO GOOD FOR YOU, UNDERSTAND!? STAY AWAY FROM HER!

...HULDA SAYS ME AN' HER SHOULD GET MARRIED TOGETHER...



THE QUIETLY SPOKEN WORDS HAD THE IMPACT OF A BOMB! THE GREAT BRAIN STOOD STOCK STILL, TREMBLING WITH FURY... THEN, ABRUPTLY, HE TURNED AND STRODE FROM THE TENT...





THE GREAT BRAIN DIDN'T ANSWER, IN A SILENT RAGE, HE WENT DIRECTLY TO SEE HULOA LARSON...

HULOA... BENNY JUST TOLD ME! BUT IT CAN'T BE TRUE! HE CAN'T HAVE YOU! NOT WHEN I'VE WANTED YOU FOR SO LONG...

PLEASE, MR. EVANS, LET ME ALONE... I... I'M AFRAID OF YOU!

I WON'T LET THAT STUPID OAF HAVE YOU! IT ISN'T RIGHT! ISN'T FAIR! I WANT YOU, HULOA!

DON'T, MR. EVANS! PLEASE DON'T!

A FEW MINUTES LATER BENNY CAME LOOKING FOR HULOA! HE BRUSHED THE TENT FLAP ASIDE AND...

HULOA! MR. EVANS!

SHOCK GAVE WAY TO COLO, STARK ANGER! SLOWLY, BENNY MOVED TOWARD CLYDE EVANS, HIS GREAT SHOULDERS HUNCHED, HIS POWERFUL HANDS TENSE AND TREMBLING.

WAIT A MINUTE, BENNY... I TOLD YOU HOW SHE WAS! I TOLD YOU SHE'S A TRAMP!

HE MADE ME DO IT, BENNY! I SWEAR... HE MADE ME!

THE SHOW WENT ON THAT EVENING JUST AS IT DID ANY OTHER EVENING! BENNY WAS THERE... AND IN A DULL, MORONIC MONOTONE, HE MADE THE INTRODUCTION...

...DUH... LADIES 'N' GENTS...

BENNY FALTERED. THEN, AT A LOSS FOR WORDS, HE DREW HIS HAND FROM BEHIND HIS BACK, AND HELD ITS GRIZZLY CONTENTS UP FOR ALL TO SEE...

...DUH... HERE IT IS... THE ONE, THE ONLY... **THE GREAT BRAIN!**

HEE, HEE! HAD ENOUGH? POOR BENNY! I WONDER WHO'S FEEDING HIM NOW. OF COURSE, HE CAN EAT HIS HEART OUT OVER HULOA! THE GRAVESIDE GOSSIP HAS IT THAT SHE RAN OFF WITH THAT GAY OLD DOG, THE SIDE-SHOW BARKER! BUT ANYWAY...

I'VE GOT TO CLOSE THIS ISSUE! I'LL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, **THE HAUNT OF FEAR!**

THE END

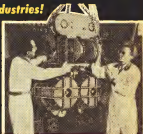


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# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! HOW 'YALL, LVL OL' HARPES AND HORRORLINE? PANDOR MAH SOUTHERN-TYPE BROOD, CHILLIN, BUT IF YOU'LL JUST HUSTLE INTO THE VAULT OF HORROR SO'S I CAN CLOSE THE CREAMY DOOR AND KEEP OUT THAT FILTHY FRESH AIR, YOUR VAULT-KEEPER WILL LEAD YOU ON A TOUR THROUGH SOME STINKING, MIAOWIE SWAMPS...THAT IS, IF IT'S ALL RIGHT BAPPU! YOU REMEMBER DRUSILLA, DON'T YOU? SHE'S MY ONLY COMPANION HERE IN THE MAGEE... OTHER THAN THE RATS! TOGETHER WE DUG UP THIS SORROWFUL SELECTION OF SWAMPLAND SPOONING CONCERNING A LONELY LAD AND HIS LACHRYMOSE (LACHRYMOSE? WHAT BAPPU?) LOVE FOR A LASS... I CALL IT...

## DEADLY BELOVED!





IT'S ONE OF THOSE HOT, SULTRY DAYS YOU FIND IN LOUISIANA. STICKY AND OPPRESSIVE. OVERHEAD THE SKY IS BURSTING WITH A CLAPPING SUN THAT ROASTS MY CAR, AND I'M GRAVEFUL FOR SHADED STRETCHES OF TREES, CRAMPED HEAVILY WITH SPANISH MOSS....



IN THE SOUTHWEST, BLACK BELLOWS CLOUDS PORTEND A VIOLENT STORM, AND EVEN NOW A FAINT BRUMLING THREAT COMES FROM THE DISTANT HEAVENS. BUT HERE, ON THIS UNPAVED SHIMPOOD, THE ONLY CLOUDS ARE THE DUST RAISED BY THE JOUGING OF MY CAR....



SALTY SWEAT TRICKLING FROM MY FOREHEAD STINGS MY EYES, BETRAYING ME TO SUDDEN TREADERIOUS RUTS THAT SLURP TRY TO SUCK MY WHEELS INTO THE MURKY SLOUGHS....

**BEAST IT!** THIS IS WHAT I GET FOR LETTING MY EDITOR TALK ME INTO TAKING THIS ASSIGNMENT?



MY EDITOR HAD BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT MY INCREASING DEPRESSION. HE FELT I NEEDED ADVENTURE, ROMANCE. **LOVE?** SOMETHING WAS **LACKING** IN MY LIFE... I NEEDED **LOVE**, HE SAID, TO SNAP ME BACK TO NORMAL....

**LOVE**... **POOGY!** THERE'S NO LOVE IN **THIS** CRIMNY WORLD!



**WELL!** **THINKING** OF MY EDITOR BRINGS MISFORTUNE. HAD MY MIND BEEN ON MY DRIVING, I'D HAVE REALIZED THAT THE CAR WAS OVERHEATING DANGEROUSLY. I SUDDENLY HEAR THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF THE RADIATOR BOILING OVER, AND I BRING THE CAR TO A HALT AND GET OUT....



**HMM?** MISERABLE LUCK? AS IF THINGS WEREN'T BAD ENOUGH?

STRANGE HOW A MAN WILL CLING TO A LIFE HE'S TIRED OF LIVING! WHAT UNSEEN FORCE IS IT THAT DRIVES A MAN ON TO MEET HIS DESTINY? I LINGER ON THIS THOUGHT BUT A MOMENT, THEN RETURN MY ATTENTION TO THE BAD-LOOKING CAR.

AND TWO WAYS ABOUT IT... GOTTA JUST LET IT SIMMER DOWN FOR A WHILE! BETTER FIND A SPOT OF SHADE WHILE I'M WAITING!



I TAKE NOTE OF MY SURROUNDINGS, AND ALL AT ONCE IT APPEARS BEFORE ME THROUGH A CLUSTER OF ANCIENT WILLOWS... A STately OLD MANSION, WITH FINE, GRACEFUL COLUMNS AND IVY-HIDDEN WALLS, APPEARING AS A MIRAGE THROUGH THE SHIMMERING HUMID HAZE....

**WELL!** A BIT OF **GOOD** LUCK FOR A CHANGE! THE BOSS **TOLD** ME TO GET MATERIAL ON THESE OLD HOMES... MIGHT AS WELL START NOW! MIGHT GET A COLD DRINK ANYWAY!





WADING THROUGH A MEADON OF HIGH-GROWN WEEDS, THE AIR PURSUIT WITH HONEY-SUCKLE AND JASMINE, I SOON FIND MYSELF IN THE PLEASANT SHADE OF THE BROAD VERANDA WAITING FOR AN ANSWER TO MY KNOCK, YET SENSING SOMEHOW THE PLACE IS DERELICT. . .



THERE NOT BEING ANY RESPONSE TO A SECOND KNOCK, I ENTER. A BITTER, ACRID SMELL PUSHES TO MEET ME. . . AND, AS GUNGLING-NOSS LEAVES ME, I CAN SEE THE SURROUNDINGS. . .



THE IVY-COVERED OUTER WALL HAS WITHSTOOD THE FLAMES THAT ONCE RUTTED THE INTERIOR. STUNNED WITH DISAPPOINTMENT, I STUDY THE CHARRED MOULDINGS AND GUMPTRE. AN OCCASIONAL SPOT WHERE THEIR BEAUTY WAS SPARED. . .



TOO ABSORBED WITH EXAMINING THE RAVAGED HOME, I DON'T HEAR HER APPROACH. I WHIRL, STARTLED, AT THE FIRST SOUND OF HER SOFT, VELVETY VOICE. . .



THE DRAIN UTILITY OF MY WORLD, THE SCARRED CHAMBER IN WHICH I STAND, ALL ELSE BUT THE WARMLY SMILING VISION OF BEAUTY FRAMED IN THE DRAWING ROOM DOORWAY HAVE VANISHED FROM MY MIND. SHE SPEAKS AGAIN. . .



I'VE THE FEELING I'VE KNOWN HER ALL MY LIFE, YET I KNOW WE'VE NEVER MET EXCEPT, PERHAPS, IN SOME FORGOTTEN DREAM. SUDDENLY, MY FACE IS HOT WITH EMBARRASSMENT AT MY OWN STUPID SAVING AND I HASTEN TO EXPLAIN. . .



THE DRAWING ROOM, TOO, BEARS STYM REMINDERS OF RUIN, BUT YET IT IS NOT AS DAMAGED AS THE ENTRANCE HALL. WE SIT ON A COUCHED SOFA BEFORE A LOW TABLE LADEN WITH FRUIT AND A SEGASER OF WINE. SHE FILLS A GLASS AND HANDS IT TO ME. I DRINK THIRSTILY. . .





I FOUR MYSELF ANOTHER SOULET OF WINE AND DRINK IT DOWN WHILE SHE TELLS ME THE HISTORY OF THE MANSION. I LISTEN, WATCHING THE MOVEMENTS OF HER LIPS, HARDLY DARING TO TAKE MY EYES FROM HER LEST I MISS THE SMALLEST iota OF HER RADIANT LOVELINESS. I AM FASCINATED.... BEWITCHED. . .



PERHAPS I'VE DOWNED THE WINE TOO QUICKLY, FOR NOW MY HEAD BEGINS TO SWIM. I HAVE TROUBLE CONCENTRATING ON HER WORDS. . . THEY COME TO MY EARS AS THROUGH A VEIL. . .

.. I'LL NEVER FORGET THE NIGHT OF THE FIRE. TEN YEARS AGO, WE WERE ASLEEP. I FELT MYSELF DOZING, AND I AWOK! I COPEDED THROUGH THE SMOKE...



IN SPITE OF MY DIZZINESS I SOMEHOW SENSE THAT IT TROUBLES HER TO SPEAK OF THE FIRE. MY HEART GOES OUT TO HER IN SYMPATHY. . .

... THE WHOLE FAMILY... I KNOW YOU MUST MISS THEM, DEAREST ELUISE.



IS IT THE WINE ALONE THAT HAS MADE ME THIS WAY, OR AM I HYPNOTIZED BY HER BEAUTY, SO THAT I HARDLY KNOW WHAT I AM SAYING...

WHY DID YOU SAY THAT? WHY DID YOU CALL ME, "DEAREST ELUISE"?



BECAUSE... BECAUSE YOU'RE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL I'VE EVER SEEN.

HER LIPS MOVE, BUT I HEAR NO REPLY, FOR A DEAFENING CLAP OF THUNDER SHAKES THE OLD MANSION, AND GRUBBS ME, STARTLED, TO MY FEET! SUDDENLY I REALIZE IT HAS BROWN DARK OUT.

OH... I DIDN'T NOTICE THE STORM CREEPING UP!



THE THUNDER SPEAKS IN A LOW ROLLING RUMBLE. I TRY TO CLEAR MY HEAD, TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S TRYING TO TELL ME. THEN I SEE ELUISE REPOSE ME. SHE'S HOLDING A LIGHTED CANDLE, AND ITS STEADY GLOW REFLECTS IN HER VIOLENT EYES. SHE BEGINS TO ME TO FOLLOW HER. . .

YOU'LL WANT TO SEE THE REST OF THE HOUSE, MR. LEEDS. THIS WAY...



SHE LEADS ME UP THE BACK STAIRWAY TO THE THIRD FLOOR. HERE THE HALLWAY IS COMPLETELY SHARRED, SO THAT THE BLACKENED WALLS AROUND THE CANDLELIGHT. ELUISE HIGGS TO A CLOSED DOOR. . .

YOU MIGHT FIND THAT ROOM INTERESTING, MR. LEEDS. MY SISTER AND I USED TO PLAY IN THERE. GO IN. . .





THE ROOM THAT WAS ONCE THERE HAD BEEN BURNED AWAY IN THE INFERNO, AND ONLY A VIVID LIGHTNING FLASH KEEPS ME FROM PLUNGING TO THE ROOM FAR BELOW. I GRAB BLINDLY FOR THE DOORFRAME.



DESPERATELY I CLAYBACK TO SAFETY.

I'M SORRY... IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE BEEN UP HERE... I FORGOT!



IT'S... IT'S ALL RIGHT! BUT I'M SHAKY, FEEL KIND OF GAZED. I'D BETTER... GO BACK DOWNSTAIRS.

WE START DOWN THE MAIN STAIRWAY, SHE CLINGING TO THE RAILING. I STOP INSIDE AT THE CENTER OF THE STEPS FOR FEAR THE RAILING WILL COLLAPSE...

BE CAREFUL! I'M NOT SURE OF THESE STAIRS. I ALWAYS USE THE BACK ONES.



BEFORE HER WARNING CAN SEEP THROUGH TO MY MUGGLED MIND, A STOP TURNS TO ACHES BENEATH MY HEELT...



BY REFLEX ALONE I SNATCH AT THE RAIL. I HANG ON AND THEN PULL MYSELF UP, SUCKING IN DEEP BREATHS AND TREMBLING AT MY HARBOR ESCAPE.

EDWARD? OH FORGIVE ME, EDWARD!

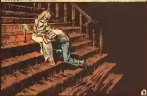
THERE'S NOTHING... TO FORGIVE, ELISE. YOU... YOU WARNED ME...



I STARE DUMBLY INTO THE PATHLESS, SWITCHING EYES AND TRY TO SOLVE THE MESSAGE THERE. THEREAS A MESSAGE, I KNOW, BUT WHETHER OR NOT IT IS ONLY A SYMBOL OF MY OWN CHAOTIC EMOTIONS, I CANNOT TELL. I TRY, THROUGH THE MIST CLOUDING MY MIND, TO RATION-ALISE... TO *THINK!*



BUT SOMEDAY I *CAN'T* THINK! I CAN ONLY BERGE A LONGING FOR THIS WOMAN...A DESIRE SO STRONG THAT EVEN THE TINGLING SENSATION OF FEAR I FEEL IS OVERCOME AND FORGOTTEN. I BURY MY HEAD IN HER LAM. HER HANDS CARRRESS MY HEAD, HER FINGERS TRICKLE THROUGH MY HAIR.





HOW LONG WE STAY THERE, I DON'T KNOW, BUT SUDDENLY WE ARE IN THE DINING ROOM ONCE MORE AND SHE OPENS WIDE THE DOORS TO THE OUTSIDE. THROUGH THE DOORWAY I CAN SEE THE MURKY BLACK WATERS OF A SWAMP, AND THE VIGIL APPREHENSION THAT HAS BEEN GROWING AT ME NOW TURNS TO STARK FEAR! HER HAND PRESSES ON MY BACK, DRIVING ME ON...



THE SWAMP IS FASCINATING IN THE RAIN, EDWARD... DON'T BE AFRAID!

ELOISE... ELOISE...

A RAIN-COOLED BUST OF WIND CLEARS MY HEAD SOMEWHAT, AND I STOP, REVULSED, CONFUSED, FRIGHTENED...

I'M AFRAID? NOT LONG AGO I'D HAVE TAKEN ANY RISK? IT DIDN'T MATTER WHETHER I LIVED OR DIED? IT DIDN'T MATTER TILL I MET YOU, ELOISE? NOW I WANT TO LIVE SO I CAN BE WITH YOU? I WANT TO *STAY* WITH YOU... ALWAYS!

OH, EDWARD, EDWARD? I TOO, WANT YOU TO STAY? NOW I'VE LONGED FOR SOMEONE



I LOOK DEEP INTO HER FASCINATING EYES AND MY FEAR LESSENS. THE WORLD ABOUT ME DISSOLVES INTO THE VAPORS OF NOTHINGNESS...



...ELOISE...

THERE'S TIME, EDWARD, AND THERE'S MUCH TO TELL! COME - I HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU!

SEE, EDWARD? THERE, ON THE WALL? MY GREAT GRANDFATHER'S MUGSET? TAKE IT DOWN... LOOK AT IT! SO AHEAD



I TAKE THE OLD GUN FROM THE WALL AND EXAMINE IT... THE STOCK, THE HAMMER, THE BARREL... EVEN THE MUZZLE...



...ELOISE... IS IT LOADED?

LOADED? OF COURSE NOT, EDWARD! IT'S BEEN ON THAT WALL FOR MORE THAN SIXTY YEARS!

I TASTE THE WINE IN MY MOUTH... THE HEAVY, SWEET SICKET THAT HAS MADE MY HEAD SWIM. I CAN SMELL THE CLOTHING FRAGRANCE OF HER, AND HER VOICE DRIFTS THROUGH SPACE TO MY EARS, COAXING ME TO FURTHER HANDLE THE GUN. MY EYES STARE DULLY INTO ITS BLACK MOUTH... MY FINGERS SENSE AND FIDDLE THE TRIGGER.



SOMEHOW THE GUN IS TURNED IN MY HAND, MY FINGER STILL TOYING WITH THE TRIGGER. THERE IS AN EAR-SPLITTING EXPLOSION, A BLINDING FLASH...



BLAM!



SLOWLY MY VISION CLEARS, AND I  
GROPE WITH RELIEF TO SEE HER STILL  
STANDING THERE, UNHARMED BY THE  
SCATHING BLAST THAT HAD WHISTLED  
TOWARD HER.

ELOISE...IT'S NEVER  
HAVE FORGIVEN MYSELF  
IF...IF ANYTHING HAD  
HAPPENED TO YOU?  
IT WAS ALL  
MY FAULT! I  
SAID THE GUN  
WASN'T LOADED!  
BUT NO HARM  
DONE!



MORE THAN EVER I KNOW WHAT SHE  
MEANS TO ME...I HAVE FALLEN DEEP  
OVER HEELS IN LOVE! I CAN'T GO ON  
WITHOUT HER! I MUST TELL HER...  
BUT THERE IS AN INTERRUPTION, AN  
OBTUSQUE, DEEP-VOICED CHIRING...

IT'S THE HALL  
CLOCK! EDWARD!  
IT'S ELEVEN THIRTY.  
IT'S NEARLY  
MIDNIGHT!  
SO LATE-TIME,  
GOES SO FAST...  
ELOISE...ON MY  
ELOISE.



A LOOK OF DEEP ANXIETY FIXES  
ITSELF ON HER FACE. SHE STANDS  
CLOSE, AND IN HER EYES THERE IS  
A PLEADING...

I LOVE YOU,  
ELOISE? I LOVE  
YOU! TOMORROW  
AND? AFTER MID-  
NIGHT MAY BE TOO  
LATE? I LOVE YOU  
TOO, EDWARD, BUT  
YOU CAN'T GO...YOU  
MUST NOT GO!



THERE'S SUCH FINALITY IN HER VOICE THAT IT MAKES  
ME SHUGGER, AND AGAIN THE UNDEFINABLE FEAR RISES.

YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME, THAT YOU WANT  
TO BE WITH ME? THERE'S SO LITTLE  
TIME LEFT, EDWARD! TRY TO UNDER-  
STAND...YOU CAN'T COME AS YOU ARE!  
AS I AM? COME *WHERE?*  
DON'T SPEAK  
RIDDLES,  
ELOISE...TELL  
ME WHAT.



THE FEAR IS DEFINITE NOW! IT'S DEFINITE AND GROWING  
STRONGER, AND WITH ALL MY STRENGTH I FIGHT TO  
BREAK AWAY AS SHE TRIES TO GRAB ME WITH HER...

YOU...YOU SAID *EVERYONE* WAS  
KILLED IN THE FIRE! THAT'S WHY  
THE GUNLAST DIDN'T HARM YOU!  
YOU WERE *ALREADY DEAD!*  
YOU'RE DEAD? DEAD?  
DON'T LEAVE ME,  
EDWARD! COME...  
PLEASE COME! I  
LOVE YOU SO!



SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO TELL ME. I LOOK DEEP INTO HER  
SMOULDERING EYES AND IT'S ALL THERE...IT'S ALL  
THERE!

ELOISE! ALL THOSE ACCIDENTS TO ME!  
THE DOORWAY UPSTAIRS...THE STEP...THE  
TUMBLE! YOU WANTED ME KILLED!  
YOU WANTED ME DEAD! BUT YOU  
LOVE ME! I KNOW YOU DO!  
I DO LOVE YOU,  
EDWARD! DON'T  
YOU SEE? IT'S  
THE ONLY WAY!



TERRIFIED, I SHRINK AND TEAR LOOSE FROM HER GRASP...  
AND, AS I STREAK FROM THE HOUSE INTO THE NIGHT, I  
CAN HEAR HER VOICE FOLLOW ME ON THE WIND, WHIS-  
PERING THAT SHE BE WAITING...SHE'LL BE WAITING...





I STUMBLE, SLIPPING IN THE MUD. I MAKE MY WAY SOMEHOW TO MY CAR. I DRIVE TO A SMALL HOTEL MILES DISTANT, SMALL AND DIM... BUT SAFE. IN MY ROOM I FLOP ON MY BED. I SLEEP... AND DREAM...



I WAKE UP, SEEING VISIONS OF HER IN THE ROOM SO REAL, I FEEL I COULD TOUCH THEM! SLEEP IS IMPOSSIBLE! SHE CROWDS INTO MY VERY MIND...



I FACE THE FLOOR NERVOUSLY, SENSING HER PERFUME IS WITH ME, SEEING HER WONDERFUL BEAUTY THOUGH MY EYES ARE SHUT... KNOWING SHE IS CERTAIN *DEATH*!



I TRY TO WRITE BUT THE PAGE IS BARREN. THE MAGNETISM OF HER UNBELIEVABLE BEAUTY IS ASTOUNDING! EVEN THE HORROR OF MY DESTINY WITH HER CANNOT DISPEL THE VIVID ILLUSIONS THAT SURROUND ME AT EVERY TURN...



MEMORIES OF HER ARE TOO STRONG! EVEN THE AROMAS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE DO NOT ERASE THE UNDELIBLE SENSATIONS I KNOW BECAUSE OF HER. I CANNOT STAY, AS LONG AS I REMAIN, I WILL NEVER BE AT PEACE. I MUST LEAVE - I MUST GO!



I MUST GO *BACK*!



HEH, HEH! HEAVENS TO Betsy! I WONDER IF EDWARD MADE THE *DEADLINE*? WHAT A DILEMMA... HE COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT ELOISE, AND HE SURE COULDN'T LIVE WITH HER! SOME GALS GET SOME WHEN A GUY WALKS OUT ON THEM... BUT NOT OUR ELOISE. SHE WAS *JURVED UP* TEN YEARS AGO! WELL, NOW... TIME TO TURN YOU OVER TO HIS MRS., THE *CRYPT-KEEPER*... BUT COME BACK, KIDNERS! HEH, HEH! I'LL BE... WAITING!

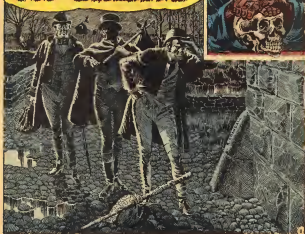




# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HELLO! SLASH RIGHT DOWN THE SLOPPY AISLE, FELLOW FRIENDS OF THE FOOTLIGHTS! PLENTY OF BLOOD UP FRONT—AND—CENTER HERE IN THE CRYPT OF TERROR! TODAY YOUR CRYPT KEEPER PRESENTS AN ALL-SCAR RASP IN A DOLEFULLY DELIRIOUS DRAMA ABOUT AN AMBITIOUS ACTOR WHO BECAME INVOLVED IN A GRUESOMELY GRAVE SITUATION, WHICH WAS TOPPED OFF IN *TRAGEDY*! SO NOW, PREPARE YOURSELF... AS THE GRIMY CURTAIN RISES ON *ACT ONE, SCREAM ONE OF THE CHILLER I CALL*

## TOP BILLING





THE HEAVY VEIL OF MIST ROLLING OVER THE COUNTRY-SIDE NORTH OF DEVONSHIRE CLUNG TERRACIOUSLY TO THE BACKS OF THE TIRED, HUNGRY TRIO OF ACTORS AS THEY CAME UPON THE DIRTY FIELDSTONE BUILDING AND SAW THE DOOR.



HOPEFULLY, BARRY BLYE TRIED THE DOOR AND FOUND IT UNLOCKED. FROM WITHIN CAME THE FAINT DRONE OF VOICES, AND HE LOOKED TRIUMPHANTLY AT HIS FRIENDS.



SUDDENLY, ORSTAGE, THE LEADING ACTOR SHOUTED.



THE ENRAGED ACTOR STORMED FROM THE STAGE AND JOINED THE GROUP IN THE WINGS.





HALLIWELL, THE DIRECTOR, TURNED PURPLE WITH RAGE AND HE ROARED MURDEROUSLY AT A GAUNT, DOUR-LOOKING YET INDIGNANT PROPERTY MAN.

I DON'T CARE WHERE YOU GET IT, DANKINS! JUST GET IT!

PHEW! WHAT A TEMPER!



TEMPER OR NOT, I'M GOING TO ASK HALLIWELL FOR A PART IN THIS PLAY!

HOLD ON A MOMENT, WINTON!

LET HIM GO, BLYE!



PERCY WINTON DOESN'T DESERVE A CHANCE ANY MORE THAN I!

THAT LOUD-MOULDED DIRECTOR IS IN A BAD MOOD. BLYE! WINTON WILL BE TOSSED OUT ON HIS EAR!



END A ROLE IN HAMLET? ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE SHREDSIGGERS' SCENE? I DO HAVE ONE PART OVER... A SMALL, BUT IMPORTANT, PART!

ALL I ASK IS A TRY AT IT, SIR!



YOU'LL FIND A DRESSING ROOM JUST UPSTAIRS, YOUNG MAN!

THROWN OUT ON HIS EAR, ENHANCE!

I'LL NEVER FORGIVE WINTON FOR THIS!



BARRY BLYE'S FACE DARKENED. WITHOUT HIS FRIEND NOTICING, HE STOOPED AND PICKED UP A HEAVY SASH-WEIGHT, AND HIDING IT FROM VIEW, HE STARTED AWAY.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, BLYE? IT WON'T DO ANY GOOD TO TRY TALKING WINTON OUT OF THAT PART!

THERE'S NO POINT IN BEING BITTER ABOUT IT, NASH! I... AH... I'M GOING TO WISH HIM LUCK!



HE WAS BREATHING HEAVILY WHEN HE REACHED HIS FRIEND'S DRESSING ROOM, AND HE GRIPPED THE SASH-WEIGHT TIGHTLY, MURDEROUSLY AS HE ENTERED...

I... I'M SORRY, BLYE! YOU KNOW HOW THE BUSINESS IS... EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF!

THAT'S RIGHT, WINTON! EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF!





WINTON TURNED... TOO LATE! THE HEAVY BASHWRIGHT CAME DOWN WITH BOMB-CRUSHING FORCE AND THE TERRIFIED SCREAM THAT STARTED FROM HIS THROAT WAS NEVER FINISHED.

ALL MY LIFE I'VE WANTED A CHANCE TO DO SHAKESPEARE, WINTON! AND I WON'T BE DONE OUT OF IT NOW!



NO MORE THAN TEN MINUTES LATER, BARRY BLYE RE-TURNED BACKSTAGE WHERE HIS OTHER FRIEND, NASH, WAITED.

I SAY, BLYE, WHERE'S WINTON? HE'S LIABLE TO LOSE THE PART UNLESS HE HURRIES!

HE'S GONE, NASH! HE GOT COLD FEET. STAGEFRIGHT, EVEN BEFORE HE SET FOOT ONSTAGE! HE LIT OUT FOR LONDON... FOR A GLORIOUS JOB!



I CAN'T SAY I'M SORRY, BUT THAT STILL LEAVES TWO OF US FOR ONE PART, BLYE! WHICH OF US SHOULD ASK FOR IT?

NEITHER! LET THE DIRECTOR CHOOSE FOR HIMSELF!

THE TWO MEN WATCHED DIRECTOR HALLIWELL WITH ANTICIPATION, BUT HE IGNORED THEM.

PROPERTY MAN! HAND IT ALL, DAWKINS, NOW! WE'RE WAITING TO GET ON WITH THE PLAY!

IN A MINUTE, HALLIWELL! JUST A MINUTE!



THIS IS WICKEDNESS! SOMEONE IS SURELY TRYING TO RUIN MY CAREER!

DON'T WORRY YOURSELF! THE PROP MAN WILL FIX THINGS!



HALLIWELL, THE DIRECTOR, STORMED AND FACED THE FLOOR IMPETUOUSLY. BARRY BLYE LIT A CIGARETTE, NERVOUSLY INHALED, TRYING TO RELAX FROM THE STRAIN HE WAS UNDER...

IF YOU ASK ME, THE DIRECTOR IS MORE TEMPERAMENTAL THAN THE ACTORS!

SEEMS LIKE HE'D BE A ROUGH MAN TO WORK FOR!



PROP MAN! BY GEORGE, TEND TO YOUR JOB! MUST I DO EVERYTHING?

THAT DIRECTOR IS A BOON!

THEN WHY DON'T YOU LEAVE, NASH? I'M NOT AFRAID OF HIM!





SUDDENLY THE DIRECTOR'S ANGER SURGED AND SWELING, HE APPROACHED NASH AND BLYE.



YOU SPOKE ABOUT WANTING TO BE IN THIS PLAY?

YES, MR. HALL! WELL, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE PLEASSED WITH MY ABILITY!

DESPERATELY, BLYE TRIED TO COLLAR THE DIRECTOR, WHO IGNORED HIM AND BRUSHED PAST HIM TO TALK TO NASH...



I... I KNOW EVERY WORD OF HAMLET, SIR...

YOU? DO YOU KNOW THE SCENES? AH, BUT YOU'RE MADE FOR THE PART! YOU'LL FIND A DRESSING ROOM UPSTAIRS!

EDWARD NASH STARTED UP THE RUSTY IRON STAIRWAY, LOOKED BACK AND SMILED TAUNTINGLY AT BLYE WHOSE FACE HAD TURNED ASHEN IN RAGE.



TOUGH LUCK, OLD MAN! JUST THE BREAKS, I SUPPOSE!

BLYE'S FACE CLOUDED, AND HIS DARK EYES FLASHED SLOWLY, DELIBERATELY, HE MOUNTED THE CIRCULAR STAIRWAY, AND MUTTERING FIERCELY UNDER HIS BREATH, HEADED FOR THE DRESSING ROOM NASH HAD ENTERED.



NOT EVEN A TRYOUT? HE SAID NASH TOOK THE PART WHEN IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN *MINE*? I'M A BETTER ACTOR THAN HE IS! FAR BETTER!

THE MURDERER'S STRONG HANDS FLEW TO HIS FRIEND'S THROAT AND HE SQUEEZED WITH AN EFFORT THAT MADE EVERY MUSCLE, EVERY VEIN IN HIS BODY BULGE! NASH TURNED PURPLE, EVERY VEIN IN HIS BODY LIMP, HIS TONGUE, BLACK AND SWOLLEN, THRUST HORRIBLY FROM HIS MOUTH.



(GASP!) THERE! NOW I'LL HIDE HIS BODY IN THE CLOSET NASH! JUST AS I DID WITH WINTON!

THE ROOM WAS DARK, BUT THERE WAS ENOUGH LIGHT FROM THE DRESSING TABLE FOR NASH TO SEE THE TERRIBLE HATE ETCHED ON BLYE'S STONY FACE.



I DESERVE A CHANCE... I'M GOING TO HAVE IT, NASH! IT'S ALL I'VE EVER DREAMED OF!

DON'T BE A FOOL, BLYE! DON'T...

AFTER CONCEALING THE BODY, BARRY LEFT THE DRESSING ROOM, WIPING THE PERSPIRATION FROM HIS FACE. HIS HAND TREMBLED VIOLENTLY ON THE BANNISTER AS HE RETURNED AGAIN DOWNSTAIRS.



NOW THEY'RE BOTH OUT OF THE WAY! THE DIRECTOR AGES TO GIVE ME THE PART NOW!



NERVOUSLY PUFFING ON A CIGARETTE STUB, HE HOVERED NEAR THE DIRECTOR WHO WAS BECOMING VERY IMPATIENT.



I ALWAYS HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING! I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER FOR THAT FRIEND OF YOURS! SO IF YOU WANT THE PART, IT'S YOURS!

THANK YOU, SIR! I'LL GO GET READY!

GLEEPFULLY, HE RACED UPSTAIRS TO THE DRESSING ROOM. AS HE STEPPED INSIDE, HE SAW THE LITTLE OLD MAN...



WHA...? WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE? AND WHAT'S IN THAT BAG?!

I'M ONLY COLLECTING! WANT TO SEE WHAT I'VE GOT?



AND YOU'LL BE OLD POOL! I HAVEN'T TIME! I HAVE TO GET INTO COSTUME! GET OUT OF HERE!

BUT YOU'LL WANT TO SEE WHAT I HAVE! IT'S PRETTY!



I SAID GET OUT OF HERE, YOU FILTHY BEGGAR! I'M TRYING TO... STOP CROWDING ME!

BUT YOU HAVE TO SEE MY COLLECTION! IT'S LOVELY! IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL! LOOK! LOOK IN MY BAG! LOOK!

BARRY ELVE LOOKED SOMETHING IN THE PERSISTENT AND EXTREMELY AGITATED MANNER OF THE OLD MAN FORGED HIS EYES DOWNWARD TO EXAMINE THE BAG'S CONTENTS, THOUGH SOMEHOW, HE FEARED WHAT HE WOULD SEE...



HIS STOMACH CONVULSED INTO KNOTS! THE BLOOD ALL AT ONCE BLANDED INTO HIS HEAD WITH SUCH FORCE THAT HE BECAME DIZZY, AND HE GROPE FOR SUPPORT, WHILE JUST OUTSIDE THE RIM OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS HE HEARD THE OLD MAN'S FRENCH CACKLE... SAW REPEATEDLY THE CONTENTS OF THE BAG... HUMAN HEADS!!



WHEN HIS DIZZINESS PASSED HE SAW THAT HE WAS ALONE! SHAKILY, HE GLANCED AROUND THE SMALL ROOM, TRYING TO FATHOM THE HORRIBLE OCCURRENCE.



COULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED... JUST MY IMAGINATION... JUST NERVES! WHEN I NEED A BIT OF FRESH AIR...



HE STUMBLED RATHER NEARLY TO THE WINDOW AND THREW ASIDE THE DIRTY CURTAIN COVERING IT.

...AHH-H... THAT FEELS BETTER! (GROANS) I'VE BEEN UNDER TOO MUCH STRAIN. HAVEN'T EATEN IN... IN...



HIS WORDS TRAILED OFF INTO A CONFUSED SILENCE. FOR HIS EYES FOR THE FIRST TIME HAD SEEN THE ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING HE WAS IN...

WHA...? WHAT ARE YOU READY, YOUNG MAN? IN BLAZES!



HUNTREADY? READY. FOR WHAT?

WHY, FOR THE PART IN HAMLETT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!



OH, YES... THAT! JUST... JUST WHAT PART *IS* IT I'M TO PLAY?

WHY, THE SAME PART YOUR TWO FRIENDS WERE SUPPOSED TO PLAY!

YOU KNOW... WHERE I AS HAMLET, SAY, 'ALAS, POOR YORICK.' THAT'S WHERE I HOLD UP THE SKULL!



WE'VE BEEN HAVING SUCH DIFFICULTY WITH THAT PART! SOMEONE KEEPS *STEALING THE PROP!*

BUT WE WON'T LET POOR SKULL DISAPPEAR 'CAUSE IT'S THE LAST ONE WE CAN GET! - HEH, HEH, HEH!



HEH, HEH? ALL OF WHICH BRINGS TO MIND ANOTHER LINE BY SHAKESPEARE. "PARTING IS SUCH SWEET SORROW!" NOBODY WAS SORROWER THAN SWEET BARRY BLYE WHEN HE PARTED WITH HIS *HEAD!* OF COURSE, IT'S HIS OWN FAULT FOR BEING SO COMPLETELY ENTHRALLED WITH THE THEATRE! HE LOST HIS HEAD OVER IT, POOR CHAPT! OH WELL, THE *DANGER-KEEPER* IS NEXT, READY WITH A YARN THAT WILL REALLY TICKLE YOU... TO *DEATH!* SO GOOD-BYE FOR NOW!



THE END





## SHOW STOPPER!



This carney, the man in the comic baggy pants thought to himself, was a set-up for a gee who was fast with his hands. In the crowd of rubes thronging the midway, a pickpocket had his choice of targets for a quick killing. As "Grendat the Clown," no one would suspect that jostling the customers was anything more than part of his act.

At the ticket booth in front of the ferris wheel, he spotted an old man counting the change of a ten-spot. Grendat slapped a nearby woman across the back with a chalk-filled sock and, while the gawkers howled appreciatively at his antics, sauntered slowly to the spot where the old man would soon exit from the ride.

In a few minutes the big wheel completed its circuit and Grendat saw his victim step from one of the cages. The old geezer shambled toward the long dark alley between the popcorn stand and the fortune teller's booth. Grendat tugged in the same direction, his eyes searching the crowd to make certain no one was watching him.

The scheme went wrong, right from the start. The old rube was suspicious of finding himself alone in the narrow alley with the ludicrously dressed clown...or Grendat's fingers performed without their customary agility. Whatever the reason, the old man began to yell as soon as Grendat had lunged against him. The clown snarled, slid his switch-blade knife from his pocket and hurled the old man backwards. Grendat slashed outward, again and again. In another moment it was all over: Grendat fled toward the crowded midway. He looked back just once at the sprawled body of the old man...the blood was still gushing from the jagged hole torn in the dead man's throat.

Slipping in among the hayseeds, Grendat moved quickly toward the flying-ring concession...a plan already taking shape in his mind. *They'll be sure to find the body soon, Grendat thought. I gotta make sure there are a lot of witnesses to testify I was hammering it up at the time of the killing. Gotta attract attention with a real eye-catching stunt. A sensational show-stopper!*

Grabbing hold of a flying-ring, Grendat waved gaily to the crowd as the big platform began to accelerate. The crowd chuckled as the clown swung his legs up over his head and slipped his feet into the metal circles. Balancing himself by the pressure of his insoeps against the rings, Grendat let his hands slide free...and smirked to the delighted on-lookers as he hung upside-down.

The platform whirled faster and the rings whipped outward so that they were almost horizontal. Grendat groped to pull himself back into a normal position, aware of the brick wall coming ever-closer to his head as he hurtled around the speeding circle...aware that one more burst of speed and he'd never be able to slide out of his perilous predicament.

The shock of hitting the wall was an anticlimax: Grendat was already moaning with fear when his head slammed into the bricks. There was a blinding jar...a momentary realization of horrible disaster. Grendat felt blood pouring over his staring eyes...felt the bones of his skull shattering...felt his breath choked off in a spasm of raw agony. His mutilated body flopped from the rings a moment later.

Most of the chattering onlookers said the act was "terrifi!" *A real show-stopper!*



[illegible]

## SAGAS OF THE SEA, SHIPS, PLUNDER AND...



# PIRACY



THE SLASHICK EDITORS OF  
PIRACY  
ROOM TWO  
225 LAFAYETTE STREET  
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

OKAY, BLUE BATS? YOU SWAGUMED ME!  
I ENCLOSE \$1.00 FOR THE NEXT EIGHT ISSUES  
OF POPCRY!

## NAME

**ADDENDUM** \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE \_\_\_\_\_ PAGE \_\_\_\_\_

BUT IF YOU CAN'T FIND *PIRACY*,  
AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND, YOU  
CAN *SUBSCRIBE!* JUST FILL OUT  
THE COUPON AND MAIL, TOGETHER  
WITH *ONE HUNDRED PIECES OF  
CENT* (THAT'S ONE BUCK, LAND-  
LUBBERS!). TO:



# VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Heh, heh! Well, I have a rusty bar of information that may come as a surprise to some of you gloom who continually write in addressing your letter to "Old Hag, 'Ugly Old Crosse'" etc. Fact of the matter is that your truly is most definitely NEITHER a Hag NOR a Crosse, nor any other horrible FEMININE being you might care to suggest! At the risk of destroying the best life of a great number of readers who send untimely communications, and with due regard to the many others who have beenology been under this ghastly misapprehension, I wish to have it known that your VAULT-KEEPER is a MAN!

This may come as a shock in view of the fact that your storyteller has recently acquired a handsome FEMALE companion. (Detailist-Ed) but having advanced knowledge of things to take place in FUTURE issues of the Vault, the making known of the above information to me and all might very well be considered unwise . . . especially in SOME circles!

(All right, Y.K., that's enough. You're not on the witness stand! Let's have some Paralyzed Poetry, eh?—Ed.)

Okay, Okay! Here's a delicious recipe to wear the hell rolling. It's from Miss R. Klinder of Chicago, Ill. and it's called "Ghouls' Goodies."

*First dress a mouldy ghoul  
And place the contents in a bowl.  
Then add a spoon or two of glue  
And mix it in a cloudy slush.  
A shovelled ear, a stringy nose,  
A punch of salt and a bloody nose.  
Then alternately add more blood,  
From a vampire's grave, a blob of mud,  
A little space, a rattled leg,  
A patch of hair and one spoiled egg.  
This highly refined gourmet's delight,  
You'll enjoy every moment till the very last bite.*

Here's another morbid mess of muddy, mucky mush submitted by Sheldon Hack, Detroit, Mich.

*Miss Fieble was a teacher,  
She also was a ghoul.  
Four and twenty children  
W'd see return from school.  
She ate a bag for breakfast,  
A girl, she gazed at night,  
And when the people caught her  
She put up quite a fight.  
She ripped out one man's eyeball  
And killed another dead.*

*She might have even won the fight  
Except they split her head!*

Now for a limbeck from Jim Self in Baltimore, Md.

*There was a young man, he was nice  
A horrible theme was his wife.  
She laughingly said,  
"What a theme to be dead!"  
While her knife was extracting his life!*

Well, that's enough poetry. The following names for our HORROR HIT PARADE were sent in by Don Donaldson of Sylva, Ohio, Robert Vennard of New York City, John Spangis of Yorkers, N. Y.; Judy Lousier of Johnstown, Pa.; Richard Fungolis of Southington, Conn.; Betty Fufkas of Detroit, Mich.; and Bonner Brady of Thomaston, Conn.

**THAT OLD BLACK CASKET  
FROM THE SLIME CAME THE APE  
MY HEART'S FRIED FOR YOU  
YOU SAW ME CHOPPED UP IN THE  
SCRAPPLE  
KNOCK A FRIED BABY OFF A TREE TOP  
A VAMPIRE, A VAMPIRE. (OHL WHAT  
CAN IT BE?)  
SHE WAS FRIED BUT HE WAS TENDER**

And now for as many letters as space will permit! . . .

Dear Vault-Keeper,

*How come every time someone gets killed, they re-  
turn and tell the person who killed him?*

*Joanna Tilmont  
Lewistown, Pa.*

Well, that's all the letters space will permit!

I trust you are notified that the CRYPT KEEPER has been given another magazine. Personally, I refuse to comment on it. If you want the info, it's all on the inside front cover . . . but those idiot editors are gonna hear more about this. Wait! O.W. hear! Imagine . . . TWO MAGS! OOOOOOoooooo, that dirty old thing!

Commercially: I refuse to give any commercials this issue. I won't tell you how much subscriptions to THE VAULT OF HORROR cost, and I definitely recommend that you do not order one! But the address for fan-mail is:

**THE VAULT KEEPER  
Room 706, Dept. 59  
339 Lafayette St.  
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.**



AH! FIRE AND BRIMSTONE! A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS...AND THE KING WHO ATTEMPTS TO AID HER BY MAKING HER ENDURE...

# The PURGE



HEAVY BOOTSTEPS ECHOED HOLLOWLY THROUGH THE DARK, SMELLY ATMOSPHERE AS KING HORACE II FOLLOWED HIS CAPTAIN OF THE CASTLE GUARD DOWN THE WINDING STONE STAIRWELL THAT LED TO THE DUNGEONS BELOW. THEIR GARGING SHADOWS LEAPED GROTESQUELY ABOUT THE WALLS AND CEILING, HIDING FROM THE FLICKERING LIGHT OF THE TORCH...

SIR BENJAMINE, I AM NOT IN THE HABIT OF VISITING PRISONERS IN THEIR CELLS!

I AM AWARE OF THAT, SIR, BUT THE WOMAN BOGGED TO SEE YOU TO PLEAD HER CASE! WE COULD NOT PERMIT HER TO LEAVE HER CELL FOR SHE IS A MOST DANGEROUS WENCH!





THE SCOURING OF RUSE, MALICIOUS RATS CARRIED THE MELODY TO THE RHYTHMIC STEPS OF THE MEN'S FEET AS THEY PASSED RINGS OF PETIO CELLS, DELIVERED TO THE OPPRESSIVE STENCH. THE KING WAITED IMPATIENTLY WHILE SIR BENJAMIN FUMLED THE KEY INTO THE LOCK...

WE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED HER, YOUR EXCELLENCY, BUT FOR YOUR ORDER TO VIEW ALL FEMALE PRISONERS PERSONALLY! VERILY, SHE IS BEAUTIFUL! SHE!



THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN ON CREAKY HINGES AND THE BLAZING TORCH ILLUMINATING THE PITIFUL FIGURE OF A YOUNG WOMAN STANDING IN THE CENTER OF THE FILTHY CELL. ON SIGHT OF HER KING, SHE FELL TO HER KNEES BEFORE HIM...

GRIE! GRIE! SPARE ME, I BEG THEM! MY EVILS ARE NOT OF MY OWN DOING! I AM ONE POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL!

BEWARE, GIRL! THE DEVIL SPEAKS THROUGH HER LIPS!



AHA! WITCHCRAFT! MY NAME IS ALICIA! I INDEED IT SEEMS GOD THAT ONE SO FAIR SHOULD BE IN SUCH MISERY! THE DEVIL HAS FORCED ME TO DO IT...



YOU WISH TO BE PURGED OF THE DEVIL, FAIR ONE?



YES! GRACE! I HAVE NO WISH TO DO EVIL, GIRL! GLEANSE ME OF SATAN SO THAT I WILL BE PURE!

DO NOT BE SWAYED BY HER WORDS NOR BY HER BEAUTY, EXCELLENCY! WITNESSES HAVE TOLD OF HER VILE DEEDS!



MY ENEMIES HAVE TOLD! I SWEAR THAT I AM NOT EVIL!

DO YOU NOT KNOW, MY CHILD, THAT TO BE PURGED OF THE DEVIL IS A VERY PAINFUL PROCESS REQUIRING THE MOST ELUCENT WILL-POWER AND FORTITUDE?



I AM INNOCENT! I AM WILLING TO ENDURE ANY PAIN TO BE MYSELF OF THIS EVIL!

IN TRUTH, SHE SEEMS SINCERE! SUCH A BEAUTY COULD HARDLY BE TRULY EVIL! I SHALL SPEAK TO MESELMOOD, MY COURT WIZARD! SURELY HE CAN COME! THIS TERRIBLE CURSE!



OH, THANK YOU, YOUR MAJESTY! YOU WILL NOT REGRET IT! MY GRATITUDE WILL BE OVERLASTING!



KING HORACE LEFT THE DUNGEON, CLIMBED NUMBERLESS STEPS THAT LED HIM TO THE UPPERMOST REACHES OF THE CASTLE, AND INVADIED THE SECLUSION OF HIS WIZARD . . .

CAN YOU DO IT, RESELMOOD? CAN YOU OBEY ME: THE SPELL THAT TURNS THIS INNOCENT GIRL INTO A SLAVE OF SATAN HIMSELF?

YEA, VERILY, SIRE! IT IS A DIFFICULT TASK, BUT I SHALL SEEK THE MAGIC TO CURE HER!



AND AT THE WEEK'S END, KING HORACE SPOKE ANXIOUSLY TO RESELMOOD . . .

HAVE YOU AS YET REACHED SUCCESS, RESELMOOD?

NO, YOUR MAJESTY! IT IS A MOST ARDIOUS TASK! THE DEVIL IS A SKILLFUL ADVERSARY!

YOU ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTIES, EN? YOU DO NOT SEEM SO CERTAIN OF SUCCESS, NOW?



AND SO THE LOVELY ALICIA WAS BROUGHT TO THE LABORATORY OF THE WIZARD WHERE SHE UNDERWENT THE INTENSELY PAINFUL MEASURES TO WHICH HE SUBJECTED HER. SHE LAY WRITHING UNDER THE DOZENS OF NEEDLES THAT CARRIED A BURNING MIXTURE OF HERBS AND OINTMENTS INTO HER . . .



OH, NO, SIRE! I DID NOT SAY THAT! I HAVE NO FEAR, I SHALL SUCCEED! I BESSEECH YOU TO HAVE PATIENCE!



THE DEVIL IS EXTREMELY SLICK, YOUR MAJESTY. THIS MAY ALL BE A CLEVER TRICK TO POSTPONE THE GIRL'S EXECUTION.

**NON-SENSE!** THE GIRL IS TRUTHFUL! YOU ARE MERELY INFERRING THAT YOU MIGHT FAIL!



NO! NO! NO! I AM A GREAT WIZARD! BUT THERE IS NO CHANCE . . .

**SILENCE!** I AM DETERMINED THAT SHE BE CURED! I WANT YOU SEVEN DAYS! IF AT THAT TIME SHE IS STILL A SLAVE OF THE DEVIL . . . YOU PAY WITH YOUR HEAD! NOW LEAD ME STRAIGHTAWAY TO HER!



VISIBLY SHAKEN, RESELMOOD THE WIZARD LED KING HORACE TO A SMALL CHAMBER WHERE ALICIA LAY WEAK AND DYING ON A STRAW COT. TENDERLY THE KING BENT NEAR HER . . .

FAIR ALICIA! WHY DO YOU GIVE UP? TELL ME YOUR SORROW!

YOUR MAJESTY, I CANNOT GO ON! THE AGONY IS UNSUPPORTABLE! I CAN ENDURE IT NO LONGER! HAVE MERCY! LET ME BE EXECUTED NOW!





MOST BEAUTIFUL ALICIA, YOU **MUST** CONTINUE! YOU **MUST** BE PURGED! I HAVE TAKEN A MOST **PERSONAL** INTEREST IN YOUR CASE! DO NOT ALLOW YOUR COURAGE TO DESERT YOU! I SEE THAT!



FOR WHAT GOOD TO CONTINUE? I DID A THOUSAND-FOLD MORE! I **WANT** TO BE PURE, BUT I AM FAST LOSING STRENGTH!



FORGODTH, THOU ART THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FLOWER IN MY KINGDOM! NOW THAT WHEN YOU ARE RID OF THIS ILL, I'LL TAKE YOU INTO MY COURT!



YOU DO ME GREAT HONOR, SIRE! FOR YOU WILL I TRY AGAIN! AND WHEN IT IS OVER, I SHALL GIVE YOU ALL MY SERVICES!



TRULY, ALICIA, THOU ART MOST WONDERFUL....

THANK YOU, SIRE!



A WHILE LATER KING NORAGE LEFT THE CHAMBER AND STEPPED INTO A CORRIDOR WHERE RESELMOOD WAITED

I TRUST ALL WENT WELL, EXCELLENCY?

ALL IS WELL... TO THIS MOMENT! REMEMBER, RESELMOOD... YOU HAVE NEVER FAILED!



AGAIN THE WIZARD SOUGHT THE MAGIC TO CURE ALICIA. AGAIN SHE WAS PUT THROUGH SOMETHING! MEASURES, AGAIN, THE SEVEN DAYS' PAIN...

WELL, RESELMOOD! HAVE YOU REACHED SUCCESS?

SIRE... I GET TO EXPLAIN! AS YET I HAVE NOT



YOU HAVE FAILED?! DO YOU NOT REMEMBER THE PUNISHMENT FOR FAILURE?!

YES, YOUR MAJESTY! BUT I EMPLORE YOU NOT TO BE HASTY! SUCCESS IS ALMOST WITHIN OUR GRASP! I HAVE **DISCOVERED** THE METHOD TO ELIMINATE THE DEVIL!



THEN WHY HAVE YOU NOT PUT THIS METHOD TO USE? WHY IS IT YOU WAIT?



THE GIRL, SIRE! SHE IS RESISTANT! THE DEVIL WITHIN HER **REFUSES** HE WILL BE DESTRUCTED SO HE HAS FORCED THE GIRL TO BE AFRAID! IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT!







"I NEED BUT A FEW DAYS MORE! BUT HER WILL MUST BE STRENGTHENED SOON NOW!"

"AND THEN I SHALL SPEAK TO HER! WE MUST NEVER SURRENDER WHEN OUR GOAL IS SO CLOSE!"



"AGAIN, AS BEFORE, THE KING EXHORTED ALICIA TO RENDEZ-VOUS HER FIRST."

"BUT THE FAIR ONE? I GROW WEAK FROM THE PAIN."

"COURAGE, MY CHILD! SOON IT SHALL BE DONE WITH, AND THOU WILT BE WISE!"



"AND AGAIN, AS BEFORE, THE WIZARD DID HIS MAGIC TO SUBDUCE THE GENTLE."



"SUCCESS, YOUR HIGHNESS! THIS VERY DAY, DID I, IN MY MIGHT, VANQUISH THE MALICIOUS SATAN FROM THE FAIR ONE! IN TRUTH, IT WAS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD!"

"AFT' EXCELLENT! GREAT WIZARD! THOU MUST TELL ME HOW IT CAME TO PASS!"



"IT WAS A FANTASTIC BATTLE, SIRE! AFTER THE SCATHING AND THE BURNING, THE DEVIL AT LAST BE LINGERED IN HIS HOLD ON THE GIRL AND FLED IN A HOST MASS OF BLACK SMOKE."



"YOU SHALL BE WELL REWARDED, WIZARD! NOW, BRING THE GIRL TO ME! I GROW IMPATIENT!"



"FORSOOTH, IT GRIEVES ME TO SAY THIS, EXCELLENCY! ... BUT THE GIRL IS RESTING! IT WAS A TRUE ORDEAL! SHE WILL BE WELL SOON!"



"OF COURSE! I CAN WELL UNDERSTAND MY HEART GOES OUT TO HER! BRING HER TO ME WHEN SHE IS WELL!"



"SEVERAL DAYS PASSED BEFORE ALICIA RECOVERED FROM THE TORMENTS OF THE PURGE, BUT AT LAST SHE WAS DRESSED IN THE SHEEREST OF GODDAMER VEILS, SPRAYED WITH EXOTICALLY-SCENTED ROSE ESSENCES, AND ANNOITED WITH THE FINEST OF OILS."



THE ELDEST LADY-IN-WAITING USHERED ALICIA INTO THE KING'S SUMPTUOUS CHAMBER, THEN WITHDREW. WITH FAST-BEATING HEART, ALICIA HEARD THE HUGE GOONS BEHIND HER BEING LOCKED TO INSURE THEIR PRIVACY.



SHE LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AS THE FOOTSTEPS IN THE HALL FROD INTO SILENCE. HER EYES SEARCHED EVERY NOOK EXAMINING THE LUXURIES THAT WOULD BE HER VIEWS OF HER FUTURE HAPPINESS FILLED HER MIND.



I AM ETERNALLY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR KINDNESS IN HAVING SAVED ME FROM THE POWER OF SATAN! I AM READY TO SERVE YOU... IN ANY WAY YOU MAY COMMAND, SIRE! SO YOU STILL WANT ME FOR YOUR VERY OWN?



ALICIA'S HEART RAN MOMENTARILY, FOR THE KING HAD NOT EVEN TURNED TO SPEET HER. RATHER HE STOOD LOOKING FROM A WINDOW. NOW, AS ALICIA GAVE HEAR, HE SUDDENLY SPOKE...



AS HE SPOKE, HE TURNED, AND ALICIA CHINDED WITH OVERWHELMING HORROR, FOR SHE SAW BY THE KING'S HAUNT FACE, HIS TALONLIKE CLAWS, AND HIS GRESATSMASHING TEETH, THAT THIS CREATURE WHO SPRANG AT HER WAS A LOATHSOME, STAVING **WEREWOLF!**...



HEH, HEH! HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT KING HORROR? HE HAD ALL THE MONEY A MAN COULD WANT, BUT WAS HE SATISFIED? **NOPE!** HE HAD TO **PUT THE BITE** ON POOR ALICIA! WHAT KILLS ME IS THAT HE **WANTED SO LONG** FOR THAT MEAL! GUESS HE DEVELOPED HIS PATIENCE BY EATING IN RESTAURANTS! HEH, ANYWAY, IT'S TIME TO LEAVE. THE **PAUL-KEEPER** IS JUST WAITING TO GET HIS CLAMMY HANDS ON YOU, SO **SO LONG!**



THE END



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! SO YOU DEVILISH DEMONS HAVE FINALLY ARRIVED AT MY HIDEAWAY OF HORROR, THE HAUNT OF FEAR! AND IT'S ABOUT SLIME, SLUGS! I'VE BEEN WEARING MYSELF TO A FRAZZLE, TRYING TO KEEP PACE WITH G.E. AND M.E. ... BUT THAT'S O.K.! THIS TIME I'VE STEWED UP A SIMPLY SCREAMTIOUS SLEW OF SLOP IN MY CRAG-CRUSTED CAULDRON! WAAAA... TAKE A WHIFF! WRETFCHED, ISN'T IT? NOW THEN, PASS ME YOUR FLATTER AND I'LL LADLE OUT FOUR LOATHSOME PORTIONS OF THE STORY I CALL...

## ALL FOR GNAWT





MILLIE HUMPHREY TOSSED HER NIGHTGOWN WEEDS INTO A CORNER OF THE UNCLEARED ROOM, AND FLOPPED HER SLUMPY FORM ON THE GRIMY BED, ON THE SAME BEPOOLED SHEETS WHERE HER FOURTH HUSBAND HAD DRAWN HIS LAST BREATH: JUST TWO WEEKS BEFORE, PALE BLUE SMOKE SPIRALED UPWARD FROM THE BUTT SANKLING FROM HER LIPS AS SHE REACHED FOR THE BOTTLE ON THE CLUTTERED NIGHT TABLE.



MILLIE TOOK A DEEP SWIG OF SCOTCH. SHE HAD COME TO CHARLIE'S LAYHER WEEPING BITTER TEARS, AND HAD LEFT SPITTING MAD.



FOUR HUSBANDS, AND NOT ONE OF 'EM HARDLY WORTH THE WHISKY. IT TOOK A *FILL* HIM!



SHE ROSE SUDDENLY, CROSSED TO THE DRESSING TABLE, CLEARED OFF AN ASSORTMENT OF COSMETICS WITH A SWEEP OF HER ARM AND STARED DOLEFULLY INTO THE MIRROR.



SHE RETURNED TO THE BED, POKED UP FROM THE FLOOR A COPY OF "LONELY HEARTS AND OPPORTUNITIES."



SUDDENLY ANOTHER ITEM SEEMED TO LEAP OUT OF THE PAGE AT HER. MILLIE'S CRAFTY EYES SWIFTLY SCANNED THE AD.





A HASTY CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWED, AT THE END OF WHICH MILLIE TRAVELLED A THOUSAND MILES BY TRAIN AND TAXI...

MILLIE CLIMBERED FROM THE CAR AND LABOURED ALONG A RUTTED PATH TOWARD A SAGGING, WEATHER-BEATEN HOUSE SQUATTING AMONG OVERGROWN WEEDS AND ANCIENT, SNARLED TREES...

IN ANSWER TO HER PROMISING, THE DOOR RASPED SLOWLY OPEN. ALVIN TUTTLE SQUINTED THROUGH PARED GREY EYES, THEN SPOKE IN A SHAUT VOICE...



SAY? I ASKED YOU TO TAKE ME TO THE TUTTLE ESTATE!... IT AIN'T NO ESTATE, EXACTLY, LASS, BUT THIS IS WHERE HE LIVES!



WAIT FOR ME, GABBY! I DON'T THINK I'LL BE LONG!



YOU MUST BE MILLIE. I'M ALVIN, MILLIE... COME IN!

EVERYTHING ABOUT THE HOUSE, INCLUDING ALVIN TUTTLE HIMSELF, HAD AN AIR OF DECAY. AS MILLIE FOLLOWED THE DOODERING OLD MAN INTO THE PARLOR, SHE STUDIED WITH OBVIOUS DISDAIN THE PEELING WALL-PAPER, THE PRAYED RUG AND PROWDY DRAPES. HE SMILED AT HER.

MILLIE HAD HARDLY SAT DOWN ON THE DUST-LOADED SOFA WHEN FROM UNDER IT CAME A LOUD GRAMP! SHE JUMPED UP, STARTLED... AND OLD ALVIN STARTED FOWING HER.



THE HOUSE AIN'T BEEN CARED FOR PROPER, BUT SHE JUST NEEDS A WOMAN'S TOUCH TO MAKE HER COMFORTABLE.



WHAT WAS THAT? HER... YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, MILLIE...

HE REACHED UNDER THE SOFA AND PULLED OUT AN ENORMOUS RAT, HOLDING IT UP BY THE TAIL FOR MILLIE TO SEE. ITS HEAD WAS ALL BUT SEVERED BY THE STRONG JAWS OF A HEAVY STEEL TRAP...

WHY, THAT'S DISGUSTING! THIS WHOLE PLACE IS AWFUL! RAH! I HATE RATS! BUT, MILLIE! YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, JUST LIKE I DID! YOU'LL GET USED TO IT!



THEY GOT A NEST IN THE SOFA, MILLIE? I CATCH AS MANY AS FIVE OR A DAY IN MY TRAPS! I RECKON THEY'D EAT ME ALIVE IF I LET 'EM MURDER ME!



WHY, THAT'S DISGUSTING! THIS WHOLE PLACE IS AWFUL! RAH! I HATE RATS! BUT, MILLIE! YOU'LL GET USED TO IT, JUST LIKE I DID! YOU'LL GET USED TO IT!





I DON'T SEE WHY I SHOULD MARRY YOU AND LIVE IN THIS FILTHY HOUSE! YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER!

WELL THEN, IF YOU COULDN'T LOVE ME ENOUGH TO SHARE WHAT I GOT, YOU CAN GO RIGHT NOW! I DON'T WANT YOU!

MILLIE RAN BACK TO THE WAITING CAR AND SLUMPED SULLENLY IN THE REAR SEAT.



TAKE ME BACK TO TOWN, OH VEN! LET ME OFF AT THE FIRST SIGN YOU COME TO! I NEED A DRINK, *BAW!*

SEVERAL DRINKS AT THE BAR IN TOWN FAILED TO BRIGHTEN HER SPIRITS, BUT IT HELPED LOOSEN HER TONGUE.



THE NERVE OF THE OLD GOOT, WHITIN' A LADY TO WANT HE CALLS A FINE OLD HOME WHICH TURNS OUT TO BE A RAT-INFESTED DIVE!

IF I HAD HALF OF THAT SKEW-BALL'S COUGH, I'D LIVE IT UP BIG! I'D GET ME A BAKE LIKE YOU AN'...



DOHN? WHAT DOUGH?

FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND DUCKS THAT HE WITHDREW FROM THE BANK YEARS AGO! I KNOW, SWEETHEART... MY OLD MAN WAS THE TELLER THAT COUNTED IT OUT FOR HIM! HE'S STILL GOT IT ALL IN THAT JOINT OF HIS... THAT IS, IF THE RATS HAVEN'T EATEN IT!

MILLIE GASPED, TURNED PALE, FANTASTICALLY BATHED UP HER BELONGINGS AND HURRIED TOWARD THE DOOR...



HEFF! WHERE YOU GOIN', HONEY?

I JUST FOUND OUT I'M IN LOVE, FALT!

LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER, MILLIE WAS BACK ON ALVIN TUTTLE'S WORM-EATEN DOORSTEP, WITH A PITIFUL THROB IN HER VOICE TO MATCH THE SORRY LOOK ON HER FACE...



I GUESS THE THUP TINED ME, ALVIN! CAN YOU FORGIVE ALL THE AWFUL THINGS I SAID?

OH, YOU WERE RIGHT, I GUESS, MILLIE, BUT IF YOU COULD LEARN TO CARE...

THAT WAS THE OPPORTUNITY SHE HAD BEEN HOPING FOR! LOVINGLY, SHE THREW HER STRONG ARMS ABOUT HIS FRAIL BODY AND PLANTED HER FULL, WET LIPS ON HIS...



DON'T YOU SEE, ALVIN, EARLING... THAT'S WHY I CAME BACK! I GOT TO THE STATION AND I MISSED YOU! I KNEW I'D FALLEN, ALVIN... FALLEN HARD!



MILLIE HUMFORD BECAME MRS. ALVIN TUTTLE THAT SAME WEEK. HOW HAPPY WERE THOSE DAYS FOR HIM AFTER DINNERS MILLIE WOULD SIT ON THE SOFA, AND HE'D STRETCH OUT CONTENTEDLY WHILE SHE FONDLED HIS HEAD...

YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD COOK, MILLIE!

JUST REST, ALVIN... TAKE A NICE NAP!

AND SOON ALVIN WOULD GO OFF INTO A DEEP SLEEP, AND MILLIE WOULD BE HAPPY, TOO, FOR SHE'D BE FREE TO HUNT FOR HIS HIDDEN FORTUNE.

THIS IS EASIER THAN POISONING THE OLD BUTTARD AT LEAST I'LL LET HIM LIVE TILL I FIND IT!

BUT MILLIE HAD TO BE CAREFUL. THERE WERE ALWAYS THE RATS... GREAT FURGE AND HUNGRY RATS! AND THE TRAPS WERE EVERYWHERE, WAITING WITH TAWNING STEEL JAWS TO SHUT ON UNWARY HANDS...

AH! YOU SOLE BRUTES!

SHE HAD HUNT FOR HOURS BUT FIND NOTHING. THEN SHE WOULD RETURN TO THE SOFA, AND WHEN ALVIN AWAKENED HE'D FIND HER THERE.

ALVIN, I'D BETTER GO INTO TOWN TOMORROW AND GET SOME FOOD! I'LL NEED MONEY!

MONEY? OF COURSE MILLIE! I'LL GIVE YOU SOME IN THE MORNING!

AND I'LL WATCH WHERE YOU GET IT FROM, ALVIN. THAT'LL SAVE ME A LOT OF LOOKIN'.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR MILLIE, HER PLAN WENT AWAY, FOR SHE AWOKE LATER THAT NIGHT AND FOUND ALVIN GONE FROM BED. BEFORE SHE COULD GO AFTER HIM, HOWEVER, HE RETURNED, SMILING, WITH SEVERAL TEN DOLLAR BILLS IN HIS HAND.

WHERE'VE YOU BEEN, ALVIN?

YOU WANTED MONEY, SWEETHEART! I GOT IT FOR YOU!

WAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, ALVIN? WHERE DID YOU HAVE TO GO FOR IT?

NOW, NOW... NO NEED TO WORRY YOUR SWEET HEAD ABOUT MONEY. AS LONG AS I LIVE I'VE PLENTY OF IT!





MILLIE'S HUNT CONTINUED, BUT IT WASN'T EASY. THERE WERE THE RATS, SHE'D FIND A HOLE IN A WALL WHERE THE LATH AND PLASTER HAD FALLEN AWAY, AND THEY'D BE STARING AT HER WITH THEIR BEADY BLACK EYES, BARING THEIR FANGS IN A VICIOUS SNARL.



IN ANSWER SHE STOMPED BACK TO THE DOOR WHERE ALVIN SLEPT, AND ROUGHLY ROUSED HIM.



WHE...WHAT? MILLIE? WHAT IS IT?

YOUR MONEY, THAT'S WHAT! YOU HAVE A LOT OF IT! WHERE IS IT?

MONEY? MY MONEY? WHA... WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH MY MONEY? I WON'T TELL... AWW!



YOU'LL TELL ME, YOU LITTLE RUNT, OR I'LL CHOKER THE LIFE OUT OF YOU!

THE MONEY, ALVIN? WHERE IS IT? TELL ME! TELL ME OR I'LL KILL YOU!



ALL RIGHT... (GASPS) ALL RIGHT! IT'S IN THE CELLAR. (GASPS)

THE CELLAR. MILLIE HAD NEVER BEEN IN THE CELLAR BEFORE. SHE HAD HEARD THE RATS DOWN THERE... SO MANY OF THEM... AND HAD BEEN AFRAID TO GO, BUT HER GREED WAS STRONGER THAN HER FEAR... AND SO SHE WENT DOWN.



WH...ALVIN WASN'T LYING? HOW EASY THIS RASCAL COMES FROM THE WALL? THE MONEY'S GOT TO BE HERE!

... AND TRAPS, EVERYWHERE! ONCE SHE LIFTED SOME LOOSE BOARDS FROM A BEDROOM FLOOR AND POKED A STICK DOWN.



BLAZES! IT ALL BUT SHAPED THE STICK IN TWO!

SHE REMOVED FOUR CHESTS FROM THE HOLLOWED WALL, STEEL CHESTS TO PROTECT THE MONEY IN THEM FROM THE SHARP-FANGED RATS, AND MILLIE COULD SEE A FIFTH CHEST DEEP IN THE HOLE. GREEKOS, SHE PLUNGED IN BOTH ARMS.





COLD BREATH BROKE OUT ALL OVER MILLIE. HER THICK WHISTS WERE LOCKED FAST IN THE MIGHTY STEEL JAWS OF A TRAP THAT WAS CHAINED DOWN IN THE HOLE! THEN ALVIN WAS THERE... SMILING.

ALVIN TUTTLE KEPT SMILING AT HIS WIFE AS HE MOVED CLOSER TO ONE OF THE CHESTS ON THE FLOOR.

A WILD GLEAM LIT HIS EYES AS HE THREW OPEN THE LID OF THE STEEL CHEST! MILLIE STARED... NOT AT THE MONEY... BUT AT THE SKELETON LYING ATOP OF IT THAT GRINNED MADLY UP AT HER.



YOU FOUND IT, DIDN'T YOU, MILLIE? YOU FOUND MY MONEY, DIDN'T YOU?

ALVIN, PLEASE! HELP ME! I'M FREE.



YOU LOVE MONEY, DON'T YOU, MILLIE? WELL, NOW, FEAST YOUR EYES ON IT!



MY FIRST WIFE, MILLIE!

GASP!

RATS STOOD BACK, THEIR CRAFTY EYES BLITZING EVIL, AS ALVIN OPENED HIS OTHER CHESTS, SUFFERING HOT FLAMES OF PAIN AND CHILLS OF HORROR. MILLIE WATCHED.



HEE, HEE! FOUR OF THEM, MILLIE! THERE WAS LYDIA, ETHEL, BESS AND FLORENCE! GREEN, MILLIE... ALL OF THEM AFTER MY MONEY! ALL CAUGHT IN MY TRAP!

CHUCKLING, HE TOOK THE FIFTH CHEST FROM THE CELLAR WALL AND OPENED IT. THERE WAS MONEY IN IT... BUT NO SKELETON! HE STARTED UPSTAIRS, DEAF TO MILLIE'S CRIES AS HE MOVED AWAY, THE RATS BEGAN GRAWING NEAR.



YOU SEE, MY DEAR... THERE'S A PLACE READY FOR YOU, TOO!

NO! ALVIN! DON'T LEAVE ME! (GASP!) THE RATS! DEAR! THEY'LL KILL ME! THEY'LL EAT ME!

ALVIN TUTTLE SAT AT A TABLE IN THE PARLOR, A TENDER GLEAM LIGHTING HIS FACE, AND HIS CHARLES HAND SHOOK AS HE LABORED OVER A LETTER, PERHAPS MILLIE'S SCREAMS OF AGONY WERE A TRIFLE DISTURBING, BUT THEN... THEY SOON STOPPED.



HEE, HEE! FIFTEEN? WHAT? THAT GRAW-SEES? BUT THAT'S THE WAY LIFE IS, I GUESS! MILLIE WAS A HARD-BITTEN GIRL, AFTER THE RATS FINISHED WITH HER! ANYWAY, IF YOU'RE STILL HUNGRY, YOU'LL FIND A SURPRISE IN THE BOOBY JAR! HER, HER FALL RIGHT, MY WATCHINGS... I'LL HAVE THE OLD BOILER BURLING FOR YOU IN S.E.'S NEW HALL, THE CRYPT OF TERROR, SO TELL THEM I'LL SAY BUT-BUT!



THE END



**1 Box of 21 New Christmas Cards**

B. J. Stuart,  
President  
Stuart Greetings

**Yours  
FREE!**

I'll Give You This Feature  
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#### OFFER LIMITED... ACT NOW!

Send no money. Just mail coupons for sample cards **ON APPROVAL** and Feature Assortment **FREE**. You must be satisfied that you can make money this easy way, or you may return the samples only. **THE \$1.00 FEATURE ASSORTMENT IS YOURS TO KEEP, FREE, WHETHER YOU RETURN THE SAMPLE OUTFIT OR NOT!** This offer is limited, one to a family, and may never be repeated.

STUART GREETINGS, Dept. 48-117  
4436 N. CLARK ST. CHICAGO 40, ILL.

I am interested in making money with your outfit of sample assortments. Rush it **ON APPROVAL** (include 21 Feature Christmas Assortment **FREE**, per your offer).

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**Mail Now!**

#### SEE WHAT OTHERS DO!

"I make \$10 to \$15 a week, in my spare time. It's easy. Your cards sell themselves!"  
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**STUART GREETINGS, INC.**  
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# Send for my **FREE** Outfit and start a **Quick-Cash** spare time Shoe Business!

**Complete Starting  
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**De Luxe  
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Worth \$35  
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**Just 2 Sales a Day  
Brings You up to \$217  
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## We Show You How To Do It!

Now, without spending one cent, you can start a spare-time Shoe Business that brings in existing cash profits every month! My powerful Selling Outfit makes it **easy**. Just take 3 orders a day for our fine, Nationally-Advertised shoes and you earn up to \$217.50 extra a month! You also get chances to win valuable free prizes.

## EVERYBODY Wears Shoes!

Here's the perfect business, because **EVERYONE** you know wears shoes! Just show friends, relatives, neighbors, people where you work, from Mason Shoe Mfg. Co. Custom shoes let them "Walk in Style". That's **REAL** comfort!

At the Mason Shoe Counter you give people the **EXACT** style, size and width they order because powder to our guest stock of 200,000 pairs in sizes 26 to 13, widths AAAA to EEEE. Custom-made shoes from over 160 different styles—dress, sport and work styles for men and women, including air cooled Nylon Mesh shoes, also work shoes with special built-in comfort and safety features. You'll be **EXCITED** the way people stuff steady cash profits in your pocket for comfortable, fashionable Mason shoes!

## Mason Shoes Can Be Bought Only From YOU!

Because we do not sell Mason Velvet-ox shoes in stores, people must buy them TV-advertised shoes with the famous Good Housekeeping Seal **ONLY FROM YOU!** .. and keep buying from you! So Right now, during our Golden Anniversary year, is the perfect time to get started. Just mail the coupon and I'll rush your money-making **FREE** Starting Outfit. The Professional Sample Outfit pictured above is sent to qualified men without a penny's cost! Send **today** and start making exciting cash profits **RIGHT AWAY!**



## RUSH FOR FREE OUTFIT!

MR. JOHN JOHNSON  
MASON SHOE MFG. CO., Dept. MA-300  
Chicago 90, Illinois, U.S.A.

Please hurry! Each Anniversary **FREE** Selling Outfit is sent to men making up to \$217 **EXTRA** a month and more **RIGHT AWAY!**

NAME

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TOWN  STATE

**MASON SHOE MFG. CO.**  
DEPT. MA-300, CHICAGO 90, ILL.



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NO. 40  
JAN.

32 PAGES  
10¢

# THE VAULT OF



10¢

# HORROR

FEATURING



THE OLD WITCH



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER









# THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEY, HEY! WELL, HERE WE ARE, ALL SET TO GO AGAIN! THIS IS YOUR VAULT-KEEPER USHERING YOU INTO THIS PARADISE OF PERIL, THIS INN OF INIGITY, THIS DEN OF DEVIL-WORSHIP. IN SHORT, THE VAULT OF HORROR! YOU KNOW BY NOW, TO COME PREPARED, DON'T YOU? SAVILLA, MY HELP-MATE, HAS BEEN WAITING BREATHLESSLY FOR YOU! SO CURL UP IN A COZY HOT-UPHOLSTERED CASKET, PUSH ASIDE THE MASCOTTY BOMBS, THE CHUNKS OF DECAYED FLESH AND AZEAL! TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND GET SET FOR THE CHILL PRODUCING TALE CALLED...

## OLD MAN MOSE!





NED ROBERTS REINED IN HIS HORSE AND BROUGHT THE WAGON TO AN ABRUPT HALT. HE SAID UP AT THE GOLDEN HILLSIDE, AT THE FIGURES HE SAW THERE WERE SEVERAL BOYS TAUNTING AND STONING WHAT SEEMED TO BE A COWERING OLD MAN WHO PLEADED TO BE LEFT ALONE.



NED LEAPED TO THE GROUND, HURRIED UP TO THE GROUP WHO NOW STOOD ALMOST COMPLETELY SHROUDING THE WHIMPERING, FRIGHTENED OLD MAN.



**STUFF AN' NONSENSE!** IF HE AIN'T HURT YOU NONE, YOU GOT NO RIGHT TO THROW STONES AT HIM! NOW YOU GO ON HOME! SO ON...**BUT!**



THE BOYS HELD BACK. NED ROBERTS TURNED TO THE HUNCHED, LITTLE MAN WHO STILL TREMALED.



THE BOYS TURNED AND SPED AWAY IN THE DIRECTION OF TOWN.

WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT THIS ABOUT THIS? YOU PRAYIN' TO THE **DEVIL**?

IT AIN'T **PRAY**, MISTER! I **LIVE** IN THE **BLACK CHURCH** SURE, BUT ONLY 'CAUSE NOBODY'LL LET ME LIVE ANY-PLACE ELSE!



NED STUDIED THE MAN. HE NOTICED HIS DEVIANT UGLINESS, HIS DIRTY, RAGGED CLOTHES, HIS GRAY, SUNKEN CHEEKS, AND HE SAW THE PAINFUL LONGINESS IN THE WISE, TEAR-BRIMMED EYES.



THEY CLIMBED ATOP THE WAGON AND A SHORT WHILE LATER THEY CAME TO A STOP BEFORE NED'S HOME. HIS LOVELY WIFE CAME HAPPILY OUT TO MEET THEM.





OLD MOSE SLIPPED INTO THE ROGERS' WAY OF LIFE AS IF HE WERE ONE OF THE FAMILY. HE WORKED HARD, IN THE FOLLOWING DAYS, TO SHOW HIS GRATITUDE... AND SOMETHING...

YES, MOSE?  
WHAT IS IT?

MRS. MRS. ROGERS...THIS IS FOR YOU,  
I... I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE IT!



FLOWERS?  
FOR ME? WHY,  
MOSE...THEY'RE  
BEAUTIFUL!

YOU... YOU AND MR. ROGERS HAVE  
BEEN SO GOOD TO ME AND ALL... I  
WEAR... I NEVER BEEN TREATED NICE  
BY ANYONE BEFORE! YOU MAKE ME  
FEEL SO GOOD INSIDE...



WHY, MOSE?  
HOW SWEET  
OF YOU!

IT'S THE TRUTH! I  
FEEL LIKE I BEEN  
REBORN! LIKE SEEIN'  
THE SUN AFTER A  
HEAVY RAIN! I'M  
SO HAPPY...



YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE,  
NOT HAVIN' ANYONE... NOT EVEN AN  
EVERYBODY TO TALK TO! IT'S AWFUL...  
JUST PLAIN AWFUL! SO MANY  
TIMES I WISHED I'D DIED, 'CAUSE  
I FELT SO DOWNRIGHT MISERABLE!



...BUT YOU AND MR.  
ROGERS CHANGED ALL  
THAT... AN' I WANT  
YOU TO KNOW THAT  
I LOVE YOU BOTH!  
I LOVE YOU LIKE YOU  
WERE MY OWN FLESH  
AN' BLOOD!

THANK YOU,  
MOSE... I  
THINK  
THAT'S THE  
NICEST  
THING EVE  
EVER HEARD!



OLD MOSE LOWERED HIS HEAD. HE BRUSHED A SPRAY  
OF TEARS ACROSS HIS FACE TO WIPE THE TEARS...  
THEN HE TURNED AND WALKED OFF TO FINISH HIS  
CHORES...

HE'S BEEN A NICE OLD MAN...

YES... A NICE OLD MAN.



SEVERAL WEEKS LATER IT WAS NECESSARY FOR MOSE TO  
GO TO TOWN, JUST BEFORE STARTING HOMEWARD AGAIN.  
HE ENTERED THE GENERAL STORE TO BUY SUPPLIES. A  
BUSY HUMMING BEGAN AS HE STRODE TO THE COUNTER.

YES, SIR? WHAT  
CAN I DO FOR  
YOU?

MY NAME IS ROGERS. MRS. ROGERS.  
I'M NEW AROUND THESE PARTS. JUST  
GOT ME A PLACE UP THE MOUNTAIN.  
IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE YOU TO  
FILL THIS ORDER!





THE CLERK SET ABOUT FILLING THE ORDER AS RED STOOD WAITING, FEELING VAGUELY UNCOMFORTABLE, GROWING HE WAS THE SUBJECT OF THE WHISPERS. SUD- DENLY, SOMEONE STEPPED UP BEHIND HIM, TAPPED HIS SHOULDER.

OH? HONK?  
MY NAME'S  
ROGERS.

I'M JIM HARMER. WE AN' THE BOYS  
WERE JUST TALKING, SEEN? AS HOW  
YOU'RE NEW 'ROUND HERE, WE THOUGHT  
YOU OUGHT TO BE TOLD ABOUT OLD  
MOSE.

ABOUT MOSE?  
TELL ME WHAT?

WELL, WE HEAR TELL YOU GOT HIM  
ROUND YOUR PLACE, WORKIN' HE'S  
A BAD ONE, ROGERS! YOU OUGHTA BE  
CAREFUL! WHY, HE TALKS TO THE  
DEVIL, EVEN!

OH, THAT? WHY,  
I THOUGHT THAT  
WAS JUST A LOT  
OF BOY'S TALK!  
ALL ABOUT A  
BLACK  
CURSEON!

THAT'S RIGHT!  
YEARS AGO, PEOPLE  
USED TO WORSHIP  
IN THAT PLACE!  
THEY CALLED ON  
THE DEVIL. THEY  
EVEN SACRIFICED  
PEOPLE!

NOW, I AIN'T JUST SPOUTIN' TO  
HEAR MYSELF! OLD MOSE'S GREAT  
GRANDDAD WAS ONE OF THE BIG  
LEADERS OF THAT PLACE! WHY,  
THEY HAD ALL SORTS OF EVIL!  
YOU ASK ANYONE!

THAT'S SO,  
ROGERS!

BY JIMMY, ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS  
LOOK AT OLD MOSE AN' YOU CAN  
SEE EVIL WRITTEN ALL OVER HIM!  
WHY, WE ALMOST STRUNG HIM UP  
ONCE, BUT THE LAW STEPPED IN.  
BACKS IT UP!

WELL, I APPRECIATE  
YOUR AIRINESS IN  
TELLING ME ALL  
THIS, BUT MOSE HAS  
BEEN JUST FINE  
ABOUT EVERYTHING.  
I'LL JUDGE HIM ON  
HOW HE ACTS WITH  
ME!

SURE, MOSE IS QUIET! TOWNS-  
FOLK WOULDN'T LET HIM COME  
NEAR, THAT'S WHY THERE AIN'T  
BEEN NO TROUBLE LATELY! BUT  
YOU BE CAREFUL, MR. ROGERS!  
ONE O' THESE DAYS HE'S LIABLE  
TO BUST LOOSE!

AS HE STARTED HOMEWARDS, ANGER SHOULDERED IN  
RED'S HEART AT THE SUPERSTITIOUS TOWNSPEOPLE WHO  
HAD SO UNJUSTLY WORDED OLD MOSE!

SUCH NONSENSE! JUST  
'CAUSE HIS GREAT GRAND-  
DAD... PERHAP! BETTER  
SET HOME! LOOKS  
LIKE RAIN!



THE DOWNPOUR HAD BEGUN WHEN HE FINALLY REACHED HOME...



WELL, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WE EXPECTED YOU LONG AGO!

ANYTHING WRONG, MR. ROGERS?

SORRY I'M LATE! I WAS TRYING TO BEAT THE RAIN, BUT I HIT A RUT THAT JOLTED MY RIFLE OFF THE WINDOW! IT MUST HAVE STRUCK A ROCK... THE STORM'S SPLIT! HAVE TO GET A RIDE!



SURE IS A SHAME! A MAN NEEDS HIS RIFLE IN THESE PARTS!

WELL, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT NOW, DEAR! COME ON... SUPPORT'S READY!



THAT NIGHT IN BED, RED TORMENTED AND TURNED RESTLESSLY, HIS MIND FILLED WITH THE THINGS THE TOWN-FOLK SAID...

BLAST IT! ALL THOSE WORDS KEEP ON NAGGING... KEEPING ME AWAKE! NOW ROSE ISN'T WICKED! STILL, HE MIGHT HAVE A GRUDGE AGAINST EVERYBODY!



PENNY! WHAT AM I THINKING! ALL CRAZY THOUGHTS! ROSE IS WHAT'S THAT?

A NOVEL! SOMEONE'S FOOLIN' WITH THE BACK DOOR!



HURRIEDLY, HE ROSE AND DRESSED HIS ROBE. STEALTHILY HE PEERED OVER THE BARRISTER... SOMEONE WAS THERE!

IT'S ROSE! OAD BLAST IT! WHAT'S HE BEEN DOING OUT THIS TIME O' NIGHT?



ROSE! WHAT'RE YOU DOING? WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?

WHA? OH... MR. ROGERS! YOU... YOU SURPRISED ME! I... I DIDN'T MEAN TO WAKE YOU. I'M SORRY, I... I WAS JUST OUT FOR A WALK! YEA! JUST A WALK!



I'M... I'M REALLY SORRY IF I DISTURBED YOU, MR. ROGERS! I DIDN'T MEAN TO! WELL, WELL, I'LL GO TO BED NOW! GOOD NIGHT, MR. ROGERS!

OH! OH! GOOD NIGHT, ROSE!



THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON, RED ROGERS HAD TO GO INTO TOWN. HE ARRIVED AT THE GENERAL STORE TO BE GREETED BY UNUSUAL EXCITEMENT.



MURDER, THAT'S WHAT! THERE'S  
BEEN A *KILLIN'*! THE SHERIFF JUST  
FOUND BLAS KEENE'S BODY DOWN NEAR  
THE CREEK! WE FIGURE YOU MIGHT  
KNOW SOMETHIN' ABOUT IT!



AS WE DON'T FIGURE FOGY HAD ANY-  
THING TO DO WITH IT, BUT THE  
KILLIN' WAS DONE WITH A *KNIFE!*  
AND THE THROAT WAS CUT JUST LIKE  
THEY USED TO WHEN THEY *SACKED-*  
*POSS* PEOPLE IN THAT DEVIL'S  
PLACE! WE AIN'T FOUND THE KNIFE,  
BUT WE GOT A GOOD IDEA WHO  
DID IT!



OLD-TIMERS HEREABOUTS *KNOW*  
HOW THEY USED TO USE THE *KNIFE!*  
THIS WAS DONE THE SAME WAY!  
NOW WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT  
MOSE!



*SURE!* YOU WANT THE KILLER  
*CACHT!* DON'T YOU? YOU'RE THE  
ONLY ONE WHO CAN GIVE OLD MOSE  
AN *ALIBI!* AND IF YOU CAN'T...  
WE'RE GONNA  
*LYNCH* HIM!



WE'RE CERTAIN *ENOUGH!* WE  
GOT ALL THE *PROOF* WE NEED!  
WE JUST WANT TO HEAR YOU SAY  
THE WORD TO *CLANCH* IT!



*HEADS* OF SWEAT COVERED RED ROGERS' FOREHEAD! HIS  
MIND WHIRLED AND SPUN IN A FURRY OF CONSCIENCE,  
DUTY, JUSTICE AND SAFETY! THEY PRESSED FORWARD  
EAGERLY, WAITING FOR HIS ANSWER... WAITING...





THE CROWD SUDDENLY DREW BACK, HE SAW THEIR SURPRISED, DISAPPOINTED FACES AND, OFFERING FEEBLE APOLOGIES AND EXCUSES, HE BACKED FROM THE STORE THE AIR CLEARED HIS Muddled THOUGHTS SOMEWHAT AS HE LEAPED ONTO THE WAGON AND STARTED HOME -



NO, NO! MOSE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT! HE - HE JUST WOULDN'T! BUT HE DID LOOK SURE! MAYBE THE TOWNSFOLK ARE RIGHT!

SURE! HE HATED PEOPLE FOR THE WAY THEY TREATED HIM! HE WANTS REVENGE! HE'D KILL ANYBODY! AND... BELLE'S ALL ALONE WITH HIM!



HIS WHIP CRACKED SHARPLY AND THE STALLION BURST FORWARD INTO A STEADY, FRANTIC GALLOP!

HE WOULDN'T HURT HER! HE JUST COULDN'T! I'D KILL HIM! HE - HE -

GIDDAP!



BEFORE THE FOLLOWING WAGON CAME TO A FULL STOP, HE WAS ON THE PORCH, RACING INTO THE HOUSE -



HIS MIND SAW THE SIGNS OF BATTLE, AS HE RUSHED FROM ROOM TO ROOM, SCOWING MORE FURIOUS EACH MINUTE! SUDDENLY -



SHE CROUCHED OVER HER STILL FORM, SHOOK, FRIGHTENED AND BLAZING MAD! AND THEN HE SENSED A MOVEMENT IN THE DOORWAY! HE SAW MOSE STANDING SNEAKILY THERE, A WILD LOOK IN HIS EYES! HE SAW THE LONG, DEEP FINGERNAIL SCRATCHES ON HIS FACE, THE BLOOD ON HIS HANDS...



WITH A SHRIEK OF MANIACAL RAGE, HE HUPLED HIMSELF AT THE OLD MAN AND BOVE HIM TO THE FLOOR! HIS FISTS WERE HAMMER-LIKE AS HE PUNNELLED AND RIPPED, POUNDED, BLOODED AND HACKED WITH A VIOLENT PLEASURE.





TIME SWAM  
INDEFINABLY,  
COMPLETELY  
APART FROM  
HIS RIND'S  
CONSCIOUSNESS,  
BUT FINALLY  
HIS THOUGHTS  
REALIZED,  
AND AT ONCE  
HE FOUNDED  
HIMSELF ON HIS  
FEET, STARRING...  
STARING AT  
HIS CRIMSON  
HANDS... AT  
THE MASS OF  
OILING PULP  
THAT WAS, A  
FEW MINUTES  
BEFORE, THE FACE  
OF OLD MOSE!



HE HEARD HIS WIFE MOAN. QUICKLY HE WAS BESIDE HER,  
CARRIESTING HER FACE AND HAIR, PLEADING WITH HER TO  
BE ALL RIGHT. THE NAME WAS SPENT... ITS PLACE WAS  
FILLED WITH A TERRIBLE SORROW, A FRIGHTENING GUILT!



"BELLE... BELLE... WHAT HAS  
HE DONE TO YOU?"

"RED... HE... I DON'T  
KNOW!"

IT'S ALL MY FAULT! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN NOT TO  
LEAVE YOU ALONE WITH HIM! I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED  
TO WHAT THEY TOLD ME! I SHOULD  
HAVE KNOWN WHEN I CAUGHT HIM  
SMOKING INTO THE HOUSE LAST  
NIGHT... AFTER HE KILLED  
SILAS KEESE!



"AND YOU'RE  
SURE?"

MOSE... LAST NIGHT WAS WORKING IN THE WOODSHED! HE  
DON'T... ALL ANYONE'S DIDN'T TELL ME, DIDN'T HE WAS TRYING  
TO HELP ME... TRYING TO PROTECT ME... PROTECT... PROTECT...



"BELLE!"

HE FELT HIS WIFE'S BODY GO LIMP. WATCHED THE BRIGHT-LAVENDER  
PILLOW SEEP INTO HER FACE AND HE KNEW SHE WAS DEAD. TEARFULLY,  
PUMPERED, HE GAZED OVER THE BATTERED FORM OF OLD MOSE. BUT  
THROUGH THE DOOR INTO THE SUNLIGHT ACROSS THE LAMB UNDER A  
BUSH HE EYES CAUGHT THE PINKISH-GREY UNIFORMED BODY. BLOOD-  
SMEARING... DEAD! AND IN THE CORNER'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND HE SAW  
THE LONG, BLOODY KNIFE THAT HE NOW KNEW HAD KILLED SILAS KEESE!  
THROUGH THE OPEN WOODSHED DOORS HE SAW THE PARTLY-FINISHED,  
HAND-CARVED... **BURN STOCK!**



THE  
END

HEH, HEH! RED LOST HIS HEAD AND  
PUNCHED MOSE IN THE NOSE! YEP! MOSE  
WAS MAKING A NEW GUN STOCK FOR  
MR. BOWERS! HE WANTED RED TO BE  
SURPRISED! WELL... RED WAS SURPRISED  
TO FIND HE'D KILLED THE WHOLE MAN!  
ANYWAY, WE HOPE YOU LIKED THIS TALE  
TAKEN FROM OUR GALLERY OF HORROR  
STOCK-FILE! AND IF YOU WONDERED  
WHAT RED DID FOR A LIVING, IT'S SIMPLE!  
HE WAS A STOCK-BROWER! HEH, HEH!  
SEE YOU LATER! EH!





# THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEY, HEY! SALUTATIONS, SCARE-SEEDERS! TROT RIGHT INTO THE *CRYPT OF TERROR*! ONCE AGAIN I BID YOU WELCOME TO THE MORROR MORASS OF MAY-HEM. JUST LATCH ONTO A LUMP LILLE, CROSS YOUR HANDS ON YOUR CHESTS AND LIE DOWN, WHILE YOUR CRAFTY *CRYPT-KEEPER* ATTEMPTS TO CLOY YOUR BOTTOMLESS BELLYS WITH A STORY FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH BLOODSHED! I'VE NAMED THIS NOXIOUS LITTLE NOVELETTE...

## AN HARROW ESCAPE!



THE SEA WAS FLACID NOW, BUT WHEN, DAWNED UP FROM THE TOP-PIANTED BOTTOM, LAY ON THE SURFACE, AND BITS OF FLOTSAM DOTTED THE QUIET BLUE WATER, BEING SILENT WITNESS TO THE BRIMBURY OF THE RECENT STORM, THEY COULD SEE NO SIGN OF LIFE ON THE CABIN CRUISER 'SEAWITCH' THAT DRIFTED WITH DELPHINE JUALERNESS ON THE SALM ATLANTIC. . .



CAPTAIN GRADY AND LIEUTENANT MORTON WAITED UNTIL THEIR COASTGUARD CUTTER BOILED UP TO THE DRIFTING CRAFT, THEN JUMPED LIGHTLY TO ITS DECK...



HELLO? ANYBODY ABOARD?

LOOKS AS THOUGH THEY MIGHT'VE BEEN WASHED OVERBOARD IN THE STORM, SIR!

THE TWO OFFICERS STEPPED CONFIDENTLY INTO THE CABIN'S CABIN, THEN STOPPED, SURPRISED AT THE SIGHT THAT GREETED THEM! THERE WAS A GIRL LYING ON ONE BUNK, AND ON ANOTHER THERE WAS THE STILL, WHITEN FIGURE OF A MAN...



WHAT IS...? ELATED, CAPTAIN! THEY'RE DEAD!

I DON'T NEED FOR TO TELL ME THAT, MORTON!

THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT MOVED CLOSER TO EXAMINE TO MOTIONLESS BODY. AS HE DID SO, THE MARK-LIKE FACE TWITCHED...



WHY, SIR? THE MAN'S ALIVE! HE JUST OPENED HIS EYES!

THE CAPTAIN APPROACHED THE ALL-BUT LIFELESS MAN ON THE BUNK WHO, WITH GREAT EFFORT, RAISED HIS ARM AND POINTED TO A LOCKER.



YOU'RE SURE, MISTER? WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE?

...BRANDS. I'LL GET IT, SIR!

THEY PROPPED HIM UP IN THE BUNK AND REVIVED HIM SOMEWHAT WITH THE BRANDY. HIS BLAZED EYES BOUGHT TO FOCUS ON THE GIRL'S BODY IN THE OPPOSITE BUNK...



SHE'S... SHE'S MARINA PETTON... FINANCEE... GONNA... HE MARRIED NEXT WEEK...

YOU MEAN YOU WERE GOING TO BE MARRIED... SHE'S DEAD, MORTON!

THE MAN SIGHED HEAVILY, TOOK A DEEP BREATH, HE SEEMED TO HAVE GAINED SOME STRENGTH...



MY NAME IS POWLER... KIP POWLER, WHERE...? OH... YES, MARSHA... Y-YOU'D BETTER LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT IT, FROM THE BEGINNING...

MARSHA, AND BILL AND ELLIAN THOMAS JOINED ME ON THE CRUISE YESTERDAY MORNING. BILL WAS TO BE MY BEST MAN...



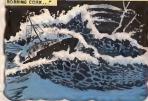
HEY, KIP? FROM THE LOOK OF THOSE CLOUDS WE'RE IN FOR A WHOLE OF A STORM!

LET IT BLOW, BILL! THE 'SEANTIC' CAN WEATHER ANYTHING!

SEA V...



"THE STORM WAS SOON ON US! I HAD CHALLENGED THE ELEMENTS AND WE HAD THE WORKS THROWN AT US! GREAT JAGGED FORMS OF LIGHTNING RIPPED THE BLACKNESS... SHATTERING THUNDER BLASTED OUR EARDRUMS! THE SEA HEAVED AND ROLLED AND TOSSED US ABOUT LIKE A BOBBING CORK..."



"THERE WAS NO LET-UP IN THE STORM. THE GREATER PART OF THE AFTERNOON WENT BY BEFORE WE NOTICED THE SHAPES OF LAND FORMATIONS BEFORE US..."

MUST BE AN ISLAND!

BETTER HEAD FOR IT! AT LEAST WE'LL BE ABLE TO ST-OUT THE STORM!



"THE VIOLENT WAVES CARRIED US BY A NATURAL BREAKWATER OF REEFS AND INTO A CIRCLE OF CALM. THROUGH THE OVERCAST WE SAW A GLOOMY OLD CASTLE PERCHED HIGH ON THE ISLAND..."



"I CUT THE CHAINS. THE 'SEAWITCH' DRIFTED INTO A QUIET Cove WHERE WE DROPPED ANCHOR AND WENT ASHORE. IT WAS THEN WE HEARD A HIGH-PITCHED WHISTLING SOUND..."

THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS! AND THAT SOUND...

...WIERDEST SOUND I EVER HEARD! LET'S SEE IF ANYONE'S AT HOME IN THAT CASTLE!



"THE LOOSE SOUND GREW TO AN EAR-SPLITTING ROAR AS WE HEARD THE CASTLE. HUGE BLACK BATS ROSE AS A CLOUD FROM EVERYWHERE, FILLING THE AIR WITH THEIR CRIES..."

BATS? THAT'S WHERE THAT NOISE IS COMING FROM!

HEAVENS! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

WE'LL BE SAFE ENOUGH INSIDE!



"IT WAS MORE THAN I HAD DREADED FOR. MARROW TREMBLED IN MY ARMS, NOT KNOWING I WAS AS FRIGHTENED AS SHE..."

OH, KIP, CAN'T WE MAKE PORT?

SURE, HONEY, SURE! DON'T WORRY. WE'LL MAKE IT, ALL RIGHT!



"WE PUSHED OPEN A HEAVY OAK DOOR AND DASHED INTO THE CASTLE. WHEN OUR EYES BECAME ACCUSTOMED TO THE DARKNESS WE SAW A BENT, WITHERED OLD MAN COMING TOWARD US. HE SPOKE, AND HIS WORDS ECHOED HOLLOWLY IN THE ENORMOUS HALL..."

AN, VICTORS? WELCOME TO HARBOR ISLAND!

PLEASE FORGIVE US FOR BARRING IN... THERE WERE SO MANY BATS OUTSIDE...





"YOU NEEDN'T FEAR  
MY LITTLE PETS!  
I SEE YOU ARE COLD!  
AND PROBABLY  
HUNGRY? WOULD  
YOU CARE FOR  
SOME FOOD?"

"THAT'S VERY KIND  
OF YOU, SIR! I'D  
ALSO LIKE TO  
KNOW MORE  
ABOUT THIS PLACE  
... I'VE NEVER  
BEEN HERE

"HIS ONLY REPLY WAS A CACOLINE  
LAUGH THAT SENT CHILLS THROUGH  
US! WE FOLLOWED HIM TO A HUGE  
DINING HALL WHERE HE SERVED  
US AN EXCELLENT MEAL. BUT HE  
DID NOT EAT. HE SAT STUDYING EACH  
OF US WITH HIS DEAD, GLITTERING  
EYES."

"AT LENGTH HE TOOK OUT HIS WATCH,  
SPINNED IT, AND LOOKED AT IT..."

"IT IS PAST SUN-DOWN,  
AND THERE SEEMS  
TO BE NO LET-UP IN  
THE STORM. I SUS-  
PECT YOU SPEND  
THE NIGHT HERE!"

"THANK YOU,  
MR. HARRISON!  
NOTHING COULD  
GET ME BACK  
ON THE WATER  
TILL THE WEATHER  
CLEARS!"

"SOME TIME LATER OUR HOST LED US UP A WINDING  
STONE STAIRWAY TO OUR ROOMS. THE AMBER GLOW FROM  
HIS LANTERN FLICKERED WEAKLY ON THE WALLS, AND  
HARRISON CAME TO ME."

"UP! I DON'T  
LIKE THIS! I'M  
AFRAID! I DON'T  
KNOW WHY..."

"YOU'RE JUST FRIGHTENED AND NERVOUS,  
HONEY! WE'LL GO TO SLEEP NOW  
AND GET AN EARLY START IN THE  
MORNING."

"ONCE IN MY ROOM I FEEL ASLEEP QUICKLY. I DON'T  
KNOW HOW LONG I SLEPT BUT I SUDDENLY WOKE HEARING  
TERRIFYING CRIES! TWO VOICES... THE HOWL OF A  
WOLF, THE SHRIEL SCREAM OF A WOMAN..."

"WHAT IS THAT? THAT'S BILL'S  
VOICE! AND LILLIAN'S!"

"HURRIEDLY I DRESSED, LIGHTED THE LANTERN ON  
MY BUREAU, AND FOLLOWED THE SCENE AND DOWNSTAIRS.  
THEY LED ME TO A RUSTED STEEL DOOR JUST OFF THE  
ENTRANCE HALL. ITS ANCIENT HINGES RASPED DRA-  
MATICALLY AS I PULLED IT OPEN AND STARED INTO THE  
DIMLY-LIT CELLAR BELOW. MY ENTIRE BEING WENT  
BLOOD WITH HORROR."

"I COULD SEE SEVERAL OPEN EARTH-FILLED COFFINS!  
BILL AND LILLIAN, NOW SILENT, LAY STILL AND WHITE  
ON THE STONE FLOOR, WHILE A BUNSTER GROUP CLUS-  
TERED ABOUT THEM, DRINKING THEIR LIFE BLOOD!  
SKELETONS!"



"I THOUGHT ONLY OF MARSHA'S SAFETY AND MY OWN! I RACED UP TO HER ROOM, BURST THROUGH THE DOOR! HARRON WAS THERE SENSING OVER MARSHA, HIS LONG VAMPIRE FANGS NEAR HER PULSING THROAT! SHE SHRANK BACK, LIVING WITH FRIGHT! I SNATCHED UP A CHAIR—

**GET AWAY FROM HER!**



"HARRON WHIRLED WITH A STARTLED SCREAM! I SMASHED THE WOODEN CHAIR AGAINST A WALL, PICKED UP A LENGTH OF ITS SPLINTERED LEGS... A STAKE! AS THE AGED VAMPIRE CAME LUNGING TOWARD ME, I DROVE THE WOODEN STAKE DEEP INTO HIS HEART.



"TOGETHER WE RAN FRANTICALLY TO THE BOAT! SEVERAL BLOODTHIRSTY VAMPIRES REACHED THE WATER'S EDGE BEFORE AFTER I STARTED THE ENGINES AND MADE TOWARD THE COVE ENTRANCE..."

**IT'S ALL RIGHT, DARLING. WE'RE SAFE NOW!**



MARSHA, I'M SORRY ABOUT BILL AND LILLIAN! I WAS TOO LATE TO HELP THEM! THEY'VE ALREADY BEEN BITTEN! THAT... THAT MEANS THEY WERE INFECTED... (JHON!) THEY'RE VAMPIRES NOW.

**I KNOW, DIP...**



I TURNED INSTINCTIVELY, THEN RECOILED AS MARSHA CAME TOWARD ME WITH LONG DRIZZLING FANGS BARED... HER FLESH ASHEN, BLOOD-LESS...

**MARSHA? YOU'VE A VAMPIRE?**  
HARRON... HE GOT TO YOU BEFORE I KILLED HIM!



KIP POWLER RAN BACK, WHISPERED A FEW MORE WORDS, THEN LAY STILL, AND WHITE. CAPTAIN GRADY LOOKED DOWN AT MARSHA REYDOW'S BODY...

**YOU'LL NEVER GET A JUMP TO BELIEVE THAT STORY, FORGIVE! IT LOOKS LIKE MURDER TO ME!**

**HE'LL NEVER BE TRIED FOR IT, CAPTAIN! HE'S DEAD!**



THE CAPTAIN'S FACE HARDENED, THEIR HEAVY BREATHING IN THE SUDDEN DEATHLY SILENCE SOUNDED IN RHYTHM TO THE LAPPING OF THE WATER AGAINST THE BOAT, THROWING OFF A SHUDDER, LEUTENANT MORTON SPOKE NERVOUSLY...

CAPTAIN GRADY... WHAT IF HE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH? YOU SEE WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE... SO PALE AS THOUGH HE HAD BEEN ALMOST COMPLETELY DRAINED OF BLOOD!

**YOU HEAR BY THE GIRL? POPPOCK, MORTON! SHE'S DEAD! FEEL HER FACE... COLD AS ICE!**





BUT LOOK AT HER **THROAT!** CAPTAIN! TWO PUNCTURE MARKS... JUST LIKE HE SAID!

HE MUST HAVE PUT THEM THERE WITH A **NAIFE** OR SOMETHING **AFTER** SHE DIED! BUT IF YOU BELIEVED HIM, MORTON, SO WHITTLE A **STAKE!** YOU CAN'T KILL HER ANY DEADER THAN SHE IS!



THE LIEUTENANT QUICKLY FASHIONED A STAKE FROM A DECK CHAIR. HE WHIEELED BY THE GIRL, CLUTCHING THE STAKE IN HIS HAND... POISED ABOVE HER HEART...



I DON'T THINK YOU WERE SERIOUS, LIEUTENANT! COME ON! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. IT'S **LATE** AND THERE'S A FOX ROLLING IN!

THE HAND-BITTEN CAPTAIN BLANCHED AS MORTON PLUMED THE STAKE VICIOUSLY INTO MARINA'S HEART! IMMEDIATELY, HER FLESH WITHERED, TURNING A SICKENING GREEN, POOR ON THE LOOK OF A LONG DEAD MUMBT THERE WAS A SUDDEN STENCH OF DECOMPOSITION...



GRIMLY, OBVIOUSLY UNNERVED, THE TWO OFFICERS STARTED TO GO ABOVE DECK. A PALE YELLOW MOON GLIMMERED EARLY IN THE HEAVY NIGHT MIST...



DON'T YOU SEE, CAPTAIN? A **VAMPIRE** NEEDS **BLOOD** TO STAY ALIVE! SHE MUST HAVE BEEN GETTING IT FROM **HIM!** THAT'S WHY...

HOLD IT, MORTON! REMEMBER, FOWLER SAID A **VAMPIRE'S** WIFE WAS **INFECTIOUS!**

THAT'S RIGHT, SIR! BUT SO WHAT? SHE'S DEAD NOW...

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT **HER!** FOR PETE'S SAKE, DON'T YOU SEE? IF SHE BIT **HIM**, THEN **HE'S...**



BOTH MEN WHIRLED IN TERRIFIED REALIZATION, BUT **TOO LATE!** FOWLER WAS ON THEM, HIS GLISTERING FANGS SNAPPING CASUALLY, WHITTLE RUNNING FROM HIS LIPS...



WELL, WELL! OH, BUT THAT KIP WAS A **SHREWD** ONE! HE DIDN'T WANT TO BE **MARRIED** ANYWAY! IF ANY OF YOUR GIRLS WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A COUPLE OF RATHER **PALSY** COASTGUARDSMEN JUST SEND ME THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD WITH YOUR **BLOOD TYPE** SPECIFIED AND WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST! HEH! ANYHOW... MAN, THIS IS YOUR LOVING L'il, **CRYPT-KEEPER** REMINDING YOU THAT I'LL SEE YOU NEXT IN THE SECOND ISSUE OF MY **REVIEW** MAG, THE **CRYPT OF TERROR!** BYE!





# A SPECIAL EDITORIAL

## THIS IS AN APPEAL FOR ACTION!

**THE PROBLEM:** Comics are under fire—horror and crime comics in particular. Due to the efforts of various "do-gooders" and "do-gooder" groups, a large segment of the public is being led to believe that certain comic magazines cause juvenile delinquency, warp the minds of American youth, and affect the development of the personalities of those who read them! Among these "do-gooders" are a psychiatrist who has made a lucrative career of attacking comic magazines, certain publishing companies who do not publish comics and who would benefit by their demise, many groups of adults who would like to blame their lack of ability as responsible parents on comic magz instead of on themselves, and various so-called headline hunters. These people are malignant. They complain to local police officials, to local magazine retailers, to local wholesalers, and to their congressmen. They complain and complain and threaten and threaten. Eventually, everyone gets frightened. The newsdealer gets frightened. He removes the books from display. The wholesaler gets frightened. He refuses shipments. The congressmen get frightened. November is coming! They start an investigation. This wave of hysteria has seriously threatened the very existence of the whole comic magazine industry.

**WE BELIEVE:** You editors sincerely believe that the claim of these crusaders—that comics are bad for children—is nonsense. If we, in the slightest way, thought that horror comics, crime comics, or any other kind of comics were harmful to our readers, we would cease publishing them and direct our efforts toward something else!

And we're not alone in our belief. For example Dr. David Abrahamson, renowned criminologist, in his book, "Who Are The Guilty?" says, "Comic books do not lead to crime, although they have been widely blamed for it. In my experience as a psychiatrist, I cannot remember having seen one boy or girl who has committed a crime, or who became neurotic or psychotic, because he or she read comic books." A group led by Dr. Erilla Kahen, Mental Health Chairman of the 88 Congress of the P. T. A., decided that living room violence has "a decided beneficial effect on young minds." Dr. Robert H. Felix, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, said that horror comic books do not originate criminal behavior in children—in a way, the horror comics may do some good—children may use fantasy, as articulated by the "comics" as a means of working out natural feelings of aggressiveness.

We also believe that a large portion of our total readership of horror and crime comics is made up of adults. We believe that those who oppose comics are a small minority. Yet this minority is causing the hysteria. The voice of the majority—you who buy comics, read them, enjoy them, and are not harmed by them—has not been heard!

**WHAT YOU MUST DO:** Unless you act now, the pressure from this minority may force comics from the American scene. It is members of this minority who threaten the local retailers, who threaten the local wholesalers, who have now letters to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency (now investigating the comic industry).

**IT IS TIME THAT THE MAJORITY'S VOICE BE HEARD!**

It is time that the Senate Subcommittee hear from YOU—each and every one of you!

If you agree that comics are harmless entertainment, write a letter or a postcard TODAY to:

The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency  
United States Senate  
Washington 25, D. C.

and in your own words, tell them so. Make it a nag, polite letter! In the case of you younger readers, it would be more effective if you could get your parents to write for you, or perhaps add a P.S. to your letter, as the Senate Subcommittee may not have much respect for the opinions of minors.

Of course, if you or your parents disagree with us, and believe that comics ARE bad, let your sentiments be known on that too! The important thing is that the Subcommittee hear from actual comic book readers and/or their parents, rather than from people who never read a comic magazine in their lives, but simply want to destroy them.

It is also important that your local newsdealer be encouraged to continue carrying, displaying, and selling all kinds of comics. Speak to him. Have him speak to his wholesalers.

Wherever you can, let your voice and the voices of your parents be raised to protest over the campaign against comics.

But first—right now—please write that letter to the Senate Subcommittee.

Sincerely,  
Your grateful editors  
(for the whole E. C. Gang)



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**ZENITH CO. 51 Willoughby St., Brooklyn 1, N. Y.**



HEH! YOU'LL ENJOY THIS ONE! BLOOD FLOWS  
LIKE A TORRENT IN THIS GRUESOME TALE ABOUT

# THE PIT!



THERE WAS A RAW CHILL IN THE NIGHT AIR, BUT THE FIGHT PAIRS' BLOOD BOILED IN THEIR WILD-EYED EXCITEMENT. THEY STOOD ENCIROLING THE BONE-SPLATTERED PIT, SCREAMING AS FRODO'S DOG SAW KNIFE-SHARP SPUR INTO SAUCE OF DEATH...



UNMINDFUL OF THE BRIBING OF THE BLOODTHIRSTY FIGHTFANS, UNDER THE BLARING FLOODLIGHTS, THE CONTESTANTS PICKED AND BAINED UNTIL ONE TORN COCK LAY DEAD AND THE VICTOR CROWNED LUSTILY WITH PRIZES.



NEAREST, FELIX JOHNSON PADDLED HIS TROUBLED BROW, SYMPATHETICALLY SMOOTHING THE FEATHERS OF TWO OTHER FLOPPY BIRDS. HIS WIFE, LILA, REGARDED HIM WITH SCORN...



NOT FAR AWAY THERE WAS ANOTHER PIT, AND IN IT, SORDED BY THE SPILL SHAKERS OF A FRENCHED AUDIENCE, TWO VICIOUS DOGS CIRCLED BENEATH BRIGHT SPOTLIGHTS, SHAPING AND SHAPFOL...



...AND THE BLACK NIGHT WAS SHATTERED WITH RALCOUS CHIEFS AS ONE BEAST LUNGED, RIPPED RED FLESH AND BLOOD-SMARTED FUR FROM HIS DYING FOE...



SWIFTLY THE STRONGER DOG SAW HIS FOAM-WET RAGE INTO THE OTHER'S THROAT, RIPPED IT OUT, AND THEN STOOD PANTING, SHAKING AT HIS RIVAL'S GUTTERING CORPSE...



ALARM BERT AND HIS WIFE BEATRICE HEADED FOR THE BERRY PIT WITH TWO MORE FIERCE, MIZZLED FIGHTERS.





THE TWO NEW DOGS WERE RELEASED INTO THE PIT, AND THE REVEREND BARS OF FRANKIE BLUE, AARON AND BEATRICE RETURNED TO THE CAGES, CONTINUING THE ARGUMENT THAT HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR MONTHS NOW...



'YOU LOVE *DOGS*! I LOVE *MONEY*! BUT YOURS TOO *DOGS* TO EARN A LIVING ANY OTHER WAY! THE DOGFIGHTS ARE OUR BREAD AND BUTTER!'

'I WAS MAJOR FORTY-FIVE A WEEK AT THE SERVICE STATION IN TOWN.'

'YOU CALL *THAT* A LIVING? LISTEN, IF WE OUP, ALL OUR BUSINESS GOES TO THE JOHNSONS! YOU THINK I COULD STAND HAVING THAT WITCH LONG IF OVER ME? YOU KNOW SHE JUST HAD HER WHOLE DUMP DONE OVER? CAN WE AFFORD *THAT*?'

'SO WE CAN'T, CAUSE I JUST SPENT THREE HUNDRED DUCKS ON A NEW REFRIGERATOR!'



AND AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE JOHNSON'S APARTMENT...



'A NEW REFRIGERATOR! BEATRICE SCOTT WOULDN'T HAVE BOUGHT IT IF I HADN'T A-BEEN IN THE STORE JUST THEN! AND YOU TALK ABOUT *SPEND* UP THE COGFIGHTS! HMPF! OVER MY DEAD *DOGS*, YOU WILL!'

'ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! I'LL GET YOU A NEW REFRIGERATOR, ONLY GIVE MOURN ME!'

IN THE NEXT FEW NIGHTS, BUSINESS GOT SLOWER AND SLOWER AT THE JOHNSON PIT. AT LAST, ONLY A HANDFUL OF SPECTATORS STRAGGLED IN TO SEE THE SLOOD-  
LETTING...



'I TELL YOU IT'S JUST THE WEATHER, LILA! IT'S TOO COLD!'

'DON'T ARGUE WITH ME, FELIX! GET OVER TO THE SCOTT'S AND SEE IF *THEY'RE* DRAWING ANY CROWDS!'

FELIX WALKED THE QUARTER-MILE TO THE SCOTT'S WHERE THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS CROWD TO SEE THE BARNAGE. HE MET AARON NEAR THE DOOR, THERE WAS NO ANGER BETWEEN THEM...



'I DON'T WANT TO GO! BEATRICE MADE AARON, BUT LILA MADE US COME! HOW'D YOU DARE BE SUCH A BIG CROWD?'

'BEATRICE MADE THE WORD AROUND TOWN TODAY THAT WE'D BE USING FOUR DOGS AT A TIME TONIGHT!'

'FOUR DOGS? I HATE FOR LILA TO FIND THAT OUT, BUT I'LL HAVE TO TELL HER!'

'YEAH, I KNOW JUST WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST! I JUST FOUND OUT ABOUT IT MYSELF, AN HOUR AGO... BUT THEN IT WAS TOO LATE!'



DEJECTED, FELIX RETURNED HOME...



'SO *THAT'S* HOW IT IS, HMP? BEATRICE PULLED A FAST ONE! OOPS... SHE THREW FOUR DOGS IN THE PIT TOMORROW WE PUT IN *SIX* COCKS AT ONCE... AND ATTACK *BE* AIDE!'

'BLADES! LILA! THOSE THOSE BE TORN BE TORN TO SHREDS!'



WHEN THE WORD GOT ABOUT TOWN, THE SPORTSMEN FOLK CAME IN DROVES, AND THEY GOT THEIR MONEY'S WORTH, TOO! SIX SANDCOCKS, WITH LONG, PADDY-SHARP BLADES CLAMPED ABOVE THEIR NATURAL SPURS, CUT ONE ANOTHER TO PIECES IN A MAD FLURRY OF BLOOD AND FEATHERS...



FELIX STOOD BACK WITH LILA, WHO BRINNED AND GRIEDEDLY COUNTED THE MONEY GAINED THROUGH THE ADMISSION RATE...



LOOK AT 'EM! YELLIN' THEIR LUNGS OUT 'CAUSEIN' THE ADOY OF THEM INNOCENT CREATURES!

LOOK AT THE MONEY! A HUNDRED AND TEN BUCKS! YOU CAN THANK ME FOR IT! WHY, IF IT WADN'T FOR ME THINKIN' OF THESE COCKFIGHTS, YOU'D STILL BE SLIMIN' 'ROUND IN THAT BEECH JOINT!

AT LEAST I WOULDN'T BE FEELIN' RATTY INSIDE... SO ASHAMED OF MYSELF!

YOU TRY GIVIN' ME, AND I'LL MAKE YOU FEEL *WORE* THAN RATTY! I'M GOIN' TO GET AHEAD OF SEA SCOTT... AND I'M GOIN' TO STAY AHEAD!



THE FOLLOWING DAY, BOTH WOMEN ACCIDENTALLY MET AT BALDWIN'S DRESS SHOP. THEY BLAMED, BUT DIDN'T SPEAK.

IT'S THE LATEST FROM PARIS, MRS. SCOTT! SIXTY DOLLARS IS LITTLE ENOUGH TO PAY FOR A DRESS LIKE THIS!

I'LL TAKE IT! JUST CHARGE IT TO MY ACCOUNT!



NO SOONER HAD MRS. SCOTT LEFT THAN A SILY, SNEEPLIN' SMILE SPREAD ACROSS LILA JOHNSON'S FACE...

I WANT THE EXACT SAME DRESS YOU JUST SOLD THAT WOMAN!

THE *JUNE*? WHY, YES, M'AM... OF COURSE!



THE SHOP-GIRL WADED THROUGH THE RACKS AND Picked OUT THE IDENTICAL DRESS. TRIUMPHANTLY, LILA COUNTED THE SIXTY DOLLARS...

IT'S STRANGE TO FIND A WOMAN WHO *LIKES* TO WEAR THE SAME DRESS ANOTHER WOMAN HAS!

THIS IS A *SPECIAL* DRESS, DEARIE... FOR A *SPECIAL* OCCASION!



MEANWHILE, SEA SCOTT WAS IN THE LOCAL POOL HALL, TALKING WITH A GROUP OF THE SPORTSMEN PRESENT...

... AND I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU GENTS WOULD TELL THE REST OF YOUR FRIENDS!

A *DOZEN* GENTS TO-GETHER IN THE PIT? NOW? DON'T WORRY, BOWEN! WE'LL ALL BE THERE!





THAT NIGHT THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH AN INSANE SYMPHONY OF SCREAMING HUMANS, AND HOWLING, BROWLING BRUTES- HOT FLESH LITTERED THE SCARLET-BOARDED PIT. BEA SCOTT LISTENED TO THE VILE UPGRADE WITH JOY IN HER HEART, BUT THE SOUND ONLY MADE AARON SHUDDER WITH REVULSION...



IT'LL GET BIGGER AND BETTER, AARON! YOU'LL GET GAPS TOMORROW BIG FIGHTS! AND YOU'LL THROW THEM IN WITH THE GOOD! THEN WE'LL SEE ACTION...WILDER, BLOODIER ACTION... THAT'LL MAKE LILA JOHNSON WISH SHE'S NEVER BEEN BORN.



THE FIGHTS WERE HEAVING AN END WHEN BEA HEARD A FAMILIAR VOICE. LILA, WEARING THE NEW DRESS, BREEZED BY HER AS THOUGH SHE WERE NOT EVEN THERE...



LILA STILL DIDN'T LOOK AT HER. SHE MERELY DROPPED THE ADMISSION PRICE AT BEA SCOTT'S FEET AND STROLLED SMUGLY TOWARDS THE PIT...



BEA FLEW INTO A FRENZIED RAGE! SHE RAN TO HER HUSBAND, AND WHEN HE TRIED TO CALM HER, SHE PUNCHED HIM...



SHE PURPLED WITH RAGE, TREMBLED VIOLENTLY, TRYING TO CLAW AT AARON'S FACE





HE HELD HER BACK AS LONG AS HE COULD, BUT SHE BROKE LOOSE, LOOKING FOR HER AVENGED CARRY. BY THEN THE FIGHTS HAD ENDED, AND LILA WAS STRAHLING CAN BEHIND THE DEPARTING CROWD.



FELIX COULD FEEL THE GUTTERING OF HIS WIFE'S BODY, THE OMNIBUS RING TO HER VOICE, BOTH SHREWS FOUGHT TO GET FREE, BUT THE HUSBANDS' EYES MET AND THERE WAS AN UNSPORED UNDERSTANDING AS THEY NOODED.



...FOR IN THE MT, STEPPING ON THE EVISCERATED CARCASSES OF A BOZEN BOON, TWO BATTLEED CLAWED GREP HOUNDS IN EACH OTHER'S FLESH, RIPPED HAIR FROM HEADS, SANK TEETH DEEP AND TORE OUT CHUNKS OF RAW MEAT! THEY RANED AND THRASHED VICIOUSLY TILL THEY NO LONGER RESEMBLED PERSONS. UNTIL AT LAST THEY WERE NOTHING MORE THAN TWO HUMAN ANIMALS SHREDDING ONE ANOTHER IN A CONFLICT FROM WHICH THERE COULD BE NO SURVIVORS!



THE SUDDENNESS OF DEAF'S ATTACK DID NOT TAKE LILA BY SURPRISE! THE TWO WOMEN FLAILED AWAY AT EACH OTHER UNTIL THEIR HUSBANDS FORBIDLY PULLED THEM APART.



A MOMENT LATER, FELIX AND AARON STOOD BY THE PIT'S EDGE, THEIR ARMS ABOUT EACH OTHER'S SHOULDERS, AND THEY CHORTLED HEARTILY WITH BLISS.



HEH, HEH? WELL, **BOBBOONE!** THERE'S A COUPLE OF **STINKING BEAUTIES** FOR YOU! Y'KNOW... I HEAR THAT AARON AND FELIX, THOSE WOODSMONE **BYGONES**, ARE RUNNING A **HOM** FOR POVERTY-STRICKEN **POPS** AND DECEIT **BAKE-SODDS!** AND NOW THAT THEY'VE NO **WIVES** TO **HOUND** THEM, THEY GO AROUND **CROWING** ALL DAY LONG! HEH? WELL, WHEN YOU GOTTA **CROW**, YOU GOTTA **CROW**! SO A GOODBY-SOOD-BYE TO YOU FOR NOW!





# E.C. WENT TO SEA IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER NEW TREND...



**AND WE CAME UP WITH...**  
**SAGAS OF THE SEA, SHIPS, PLUNDER AND...**

# PIRACY

**NOW YOU SEARCH  
FOR IT!**

**BUT IF YOU CAN'T FIND PIRACY  
AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND, YOU  
CAN SUBSCRIBE! JUST FILL OUT  
THE COUPON AND MAIL, TOGETHER  
WITH ONE HUNDRED PIECES OF  
CENT (THAT'S ONE DUCK, LAND-  
LUBBERS!), TO:**

THE SEARCH EDITORS OF  
PIRACY  
ROOM 106  
225 LAFAYETTE STREET  
N.Y.C. 10, N.Y.

**ORAY, BILGE RATS! YOU SHANGHAIED ME!  
I ENCLOSE \$1.00 FOR THE NEXT EIGHT ISSUES  
OF PIRACY!**

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STATE  ZIP



# BLOODSUCKERS

The gun bucked in his hand and Storch saw the old man slump to the ground in a spreading pool of blood. A sharp pain in his shoulder made Storch stagger backwards, a gasp of surprise escaping from his throat. His hand leaped to his shoulder: he winced in agony and saw the gore trickle spreading between his fingers and staining his palm.

He'd been hit by a lucky shot. He had to get out of this frontier town before they strung him up for killing Quint Barlow. While he could still move he had to get as far away as possible . . . back out till nightfall, then slip across the border to safety.

Storch lunged across the dusty street, flung himself onto his mazy horse and brutally dug his spurs into the animal's flesh. In a spume of dirt the grimy buildings were left behind . . . Storch clattered through the outskirts of Fentonville before the alarm had even been sounded and a posse could be organized.

It would be a necktie party for sure, Storch thought grimly. Hanging on desperately with his good arm, he hunched far over the horse's shaggy mane and bit his lips to keep from crying out. They hated him here on the plains . . . nobody'd ever listen if he pleaded that Quint Barlow had slapped leather first. Ever since he'd slugged that Brindle boy these sodabusters had it in for him . . . shooting a man like Barlow meant a boothill burial for a maverick like Storch if they ever got their bloodsucking hands on him. *That's* what they were, where a ransy like Storch was involved: ferocious bloodsuckers out to drain the life fluid from a man who had the guts to stand up to 'em!

His strength was fading fast. The shoulder throbbed violently and spasms of nausea were welling up in his throat. He couldn't stand another minute of this hunting over the jagged terrain; he had to rest for awhile . . . had to hide in the fields long enough to pry the stinging bullet from his tortured flesh.

The long swath of waving grain was just what he needed. Stumbling painfully from the animal's back, he scurried deep into the wheat field, crouching low so they couldn't spot him from the surrounding hills. With a grimace of pain, Storch sprawled headlong between the towering rows of grain. He'd be safe here till nightfall, then he'd be able to slither across the border. He'd just rest here for a moment . . . after he'd caught his breath he'd cut that cursed bullet from his flesh.

How long he lay in groggy sleep he never discovered. He was shocked back to wakefulness by the eerie whining sound that filled the plains. Glancing aloft, he saw that the sun had been obscured by an undulating cloud which moved onward with relentless fury. He sat upright, his nerves tense and a fluttering of fear knocking his stomach. And then he saw what was hovering ominously overhead.

The first thick wave of locusts descended on the field before he could scramble weakly to his feet. The swarm of insects settled like a deadly pall over the stalks of grain: their slimy bodies clotted his hair and made his skin crawl in terror. He tried to shake them off . . . to rise and run in horror . . . but they enveloped him like a living, writhing shroud. He screamed in fear . . . but already the sound of gnawing was enveloping his consciousness. They murdered everything in their path, Storch knew as he tried to squirm free . . . the grain blackened with their bodies and the ground became oozy with the gorging, rapacious creatures.

Storch sank to the ground, and the locusts buried him in an instant. They slashed at his flesh as if he was a doomed stalk of wheat . . . a thousand stabs of agony made his body shudder. The blood poured from his pierced flesh . . . his skin was torn loose by cruel pinners.

Long before the cloud of bloodsuckers rose from the desolate field, in a whining, scraping crescendo, Storch's bones had been picked clean.



# THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

WEE, WEE! SO YOU'VE FINALLY REACHED THE HAUNT OF FEAR, OH! WELL, HOP RIGHT INTO MY HUMBLE HUT, 'CAUSE I'VE REALLY GOT A HUNK OF BONE BOILING FOR YOU IN THAT CRAZY CAULDRON OF WINE! MMMM-MY! THAT STEACH? OH, THE FOUNDRATOR WAS HERE...SEEMS THERE WERE SOME FLEAS LEFT-OVER FROM MY FUTURE PIECE ABOUT THE POORDEST WEE! ANYHOW, PEOPLES, THIS DELICIOUS GUTTY TOOK SIX DEGENERATIONS OF THE FAMOUS FRANKENSTEIN FAMILY TO DEVELOP, SO LET'S HAVE A BIT OF QUET WHILE I OPEN MY BIG BLACK BOOK TO THE CHAPTER ON BLOODS AND COMMENCE THE WRETCHED STORY, AS TOLD BY DR. EMIL FRANKENSTEIN HIMSELF, CALLED...

## ASHES TO ASHES!



THIS MOSS-COVERED HEAP CLOSTYERD IN WURTEMBERG'S BLACK FOREST IS MY HOME, MY LABORATORY, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR THE FRANKENSTEIN FAMILY FOR SOME ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS. YARE, IT IS BLEAK...YES, EVEN UNPLEASANT...BUT HERE WE HAVE HAD THE UTMOST SECLUSION OUR GREAT EXPERIMENT HAS DEMANDED!



WHAT I RECORD HERE IN MY DIARY I DO WITH A HEARTY HEART, FOR IN IT LIES THE FUTURE TOOL OF SIX GENERATIONS, AND MY OWN BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT...



I SUPPOSE I SHOULD START BY SAYING THAT I AM EMIL FRANKEN-STEIN, THE ONLY LIVING DESCENDANT OF THAT EQUALLY UNFORTUNATE SCIENTIST WHO CREATED THE INFAMOUS MONSTER...



IT WAS HIS SON WHO, IN 1871, DECIDED TO JUSTIFY HIS FATHER'S BELIEF THAT MAN CAN CREATE MAN-LEVELLED THE THEORY THAT MANING DEVELOPED FROM THE LOWEST FORMS OF DECAYED MATTER



HE STARTED WITH WHAT I CAN ONLY CALL A MASS OF PUTRESCENCE, BORN BY HIS OWN HANDS FROM A MESSY SWAMP, BLENDED WITH WASTE DREDGED FROM AN ABANDONED DEEPSPOOL. HERE HE BEGAN, IN THIS VERY SAME LAB, AT THE FIRST STEP OF HUMAN CREATION!



FROM THEN ON THE DEDICATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOWLY BIRTHING GELATINOUS MASS WAS HANDLED DOWN FROM PARENT TO CHILD, THROUGH THE YEARS THE HELPLESS EVERYTHING GLOB WAS CHEMICALLY FEED, KEPT WARM...



THERE WOULD BE NO GLORY FOR HIM, HE KNEW, BUT HE LABORED ARDENTLY OVER THE INCUBATION OF THE SHAPELESS, LIFELESS GLOB OF MUCK? HE WAS PAST THE AGE OF SEVENTY WHEN HE AND HIS SON FIRST NOTICED THE SLIGHTEST PULSATIONS THAT SIGNIFIED ITS LIFE!



SLOWLY, EVER SO SLOWLY, EACH SUCCEEDING GENERATION WORKED WITH UNTIRING EFFORTS TO NOURISH AND CULTIVATE THE LIVING THING THAT NOW WAS EVOLVED LUNGS IN ADDITION TO ITS HEART.





FILMY, JELLY-ARM AND LEGS  
HAD FORMED WHEN MY FATHER  
ASSUMED THE RESPONSIBILITY, AND  
IT WAS HE WHO BROUGHT ABOUT THE  
GREATEST DEVELOPMENT... THE  
CREATOR HAD FORMED A HEAD...AND  
A MOUTH!



I FULLY REALIZED THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE OF THE  
RESPONSIBILITY NOW RESTING HEAVILY ON MY SHOULDERS,  
AND DEEP INTO THE NIGHT I WOULD STUDY AND PORE  
OVER THE VOLUMINOUS NOTEBOOKS THAT HAD BEEN  
HANDS DOWN TO ME.



I WAS FIFTY  
YEARS OF AGE  
WHEN THAT  
ENORMOUSLY  
IMPORTANT  
DAY CAME! I  
WAS AT LAST  
SATISFIED  
THAT WHAT  
SIX GENERA-  
TIONS HAD  
SACRIFICED  
AND STRIVED  
FOR WAS NOW  
COMPLETE!  
NOW WELL I  
RECALL THAT I  
WAS CROONING  
WITH SWEET  
AS I REACHED  
INTO THE  
INCUBATOR...



BUT THOUGH MY FATHER'S JOY  
WAS GREAT AND HIS HOPES HIGH,  
HE KNEW HE WOULD NOT LIVE TO  
SEE THE FINAL MATURING OF THE  
FAMILY'S CREATION! BUT... IN MY  
LIFETIME!



A MONTH LATER MY FATHER DIED  
AND I AT ONCE TOOK UP WHERE HE  
LEFT OFF WITHIN THREE YEARS THE  
SEMI-HUMAN CREATURE WAS TAKING  
CHEMICAL FOOD BY MOUTH.



BEFORE I PASSED MY THIRTIES I REALIZED THAT  
THE FULL DEVELOPMENT TO A HUMAN BEING COULD  
BE ACHIEVED WITHIN THIRTY YEARS! I TOOK NOT EVEN  
TIME TO MARRY, AND SPENT ALL BUT A FEW HOURS A  
DAY AT MY LABOR, OR MAKING NOTES.



IT CAME FORTH, BABLING LIKE ANY NEWBORN INFANT...  
A PERFECT HUMAN CHILD, CREATED FROM RAW SLIME!



HERE IT IS! AT LAST,  
MY ANCESTORS! I FEEL  
YOU HEAR... NOW HEAR  
ME REJOICE WITH  
ME IN OUR  
MASTERY!



SUDDENLY A NEW PROBLEM AROSE...

THE FINAL PROOF THAT THIS CHILD IS A NORMAL HUMAN LIES WITH THE FUTURE... CAN IT MARRY AND PRODUCE CHILDREN OF ITS OWN? NOW CAN I, A BACHELOR, BRING IT UP? NO, I MUST FIND A WAY.



THE NEXT DAY I BROUGHT THE INFANT TO A HOSPITAL AT STUTTGART TO ASK A DOCTOR'S ADVICE. WHEN TWO NURSES UNWITTINGLY SOLVED MY DILEMMA.

I CAN'T REMOVE THE BABY'S BODY FROM THE NURSERY TILL I GET DR. KOHN'S ORDERS.

THE POOR MOTHER? SHE WANTED THAT CHILD SO BADLY.



I EASILY LOCATED THE NURSERY AND THE DEAD INFANT. IT WAS BUT THE WORK OF A FEW MOMENTS TO SWITCH THE BABIES. TO PUT THE IDENTIFICATION BRACELET OF THE DEAD CHILD ON THE ARM OF THE LIVE FRANKENSTEIN CHILD.



I JOTTED DOWN THE CHILD'S NEW NAME, WRAPPED THE DEAD INFANT IN A BLANKET AND LEFT THE HOSPITAL. I BURIED THE CHILD AS DECENTLY AS POSSIBLE, THEN RETURNED HOME. THAT NIGHT, I ADDED ONE MORE NOTE TO THE TIME-YELLOWED PAGES OF MY OLD NOTEBOOK.



AND SO I WRITE ITS NAME HERE, AND ASK THAT IT BE KEPT SECRET FOR ONE HUNDRED YEARS FROM THIS DATE.

I CLOSED THE BLACK PORRIT MOUTH AND MOVED TO THE CITY OF STUTTGART. THE BETTER TO OBSERVE THE GROWTH OF MY ANCESTOR'S DREAM CREATURE. FOR TWENTY YEARS I SECRETLY WATCHED. ENHANCED, SPED. NOT LONG AGO.



I DID NOT FOLLOW YOU HERE, RIKER? FOR ME YOU DO NOT EXIST, EXCEPT WHEN YOU ARRIVE MY "FIANCEE".

YOUR FIANCEE? THEN LOUISA HAS ACCEPTED YOU?

NO...NOT YET? BUT SHE WILL, TONIGHT? YOU'RE A FOOL, RIKER? YOU ARE RICH, BUT YOU CAN'T EXPECT TO MARRY INTO THE VON KOENIGS FAMILY WITH YOUR BACKGROUND?

FFAN? I HARDLY THINK LOUISA IS QUITE THE JACOB THAT YOU ARE, HENRICH GOEL?



I STEPPED IN, THEN, CHUCKLING TO MYSELF, FOR ONLY I KNEW HOW IMPORTANT ONE OF THOSE YOUNG MEN WAS TO ME.



FFAN? YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A DIRTY SOCIAL CLIMBER!

YOU ENOUGH SWINE? TOMORROW YOU'LL BE MY WIFE!

GENTLEMAN? GENTLEMAN, PLEASE? MAY I OFFER A SUGGESTION?





I COULD NOT HELP HEARING THE CAUSE OF YOUR DISPUTE... A YOUNG LADY, NOT WELL, THEN, LET HER DECIDE...

WHAT RIGHT HAVE YOU TO INTERFERE?

HMP! SO YOU ARE AFRAID TO FACE HER WITH ME?



AT THAT, HEINRICH YELDED, AND UNDER THE PRETEXT OF SEEING THERE WOULD BE NO FIGHT, I WENT WITH THEM TO THE MOONING MANSION.

IF THE GIRL IS AS LOVELY AS HER HOME, THEN I UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE BOTH SO EAGER TO MARRY HER...



INDEED, LOUISA MOONING WAS LOVELY. FORGIVE ME, MISS MOONING... BUT I HAVE ONLY PREVENTED BLOODSHED BETWEEN THESE TWO FRIENDS OF YOURS BY CONVINCING THEM YOU COULD "SETTLE THEIR ARGUMENT?"

I KNOW WHAT IT IS, SAID I MAY AS WELL FACE IT NOW AS LATER!

I REMAINED IN THE PORCH, WHILE HEINRICH AND KARL WENT WITH HER INTO THE DRAWING ROOM. I COULD HEAR THE WELL-POISED YOUNG LADY SET RIGHT TO HEART OF THE MATTER...



KARL, YOU'RE A FINE MAN... I THINK VERY HIGHLY OF YOU!

BUT... BUT YOU DO NOT LOVE ME... IS THAT IT?

I HEARD KARL RATHER CHOKE ON THOSE WORDS. HE BURNED BY ME, HIS FACE TAUNT, BITTER AS HE DASHED FROM THE HOUSE. I CALLED TO HIM, AS DID LOUISA, BUT HE PAID NO HEED...



KARL... YOU WILL ALWAYS BE A GOOD FRIEND!

KARL! WAIT! I'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU!

THE FRONT DOOR SLAMMED VIOLENTLY BEHIND HIM, FOR A WHILE I STOOD THERE IN THE SILENCE, BUT THEN I AGAIN HEARD THE VOICE OF LOUISA, NOW ADDRESSING HEINRICH.



IT'S YOU THAT I CHOOSE TO BE MY HUSBAND, HEINRICH! IT'S YOU THAT I LOVE!

YOU'VE MADE ME VERY HAPPY MY DARLING, AND I SHALL TRY TO MAKE YOU AS HAPPY, ALWAYS, AS I AM NOW...

WHEN THEY RETURNED TO WHERE I STOOD IN THE PORCH, THEY WERE HOLDING HANDS. BOTH SMILED HAPPILY.



I DON'T KNOW YOU, SAID I FEEL AS THOUGH I'VE KNOWN YOU ALL MY LIFE... LIKE A GOOD FRIEND. CERTAINLY YOU HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO COME TO OUR ENGAGEMENT PARTY!

I SHALL BE MOST DELIGHTED, HEINRICH!



AND SO I WAS THERE THE NEXT WEEK TO HEAR THE  
DAD ANNOUNCE THEIR ENGAGEMENT WHEN I MET  
LOUISA'S ARISTOCRATIC MOTHER AND THE FAMILY'S  
DISTINGUISHED FRIENDS. I REALIZED KARL WOULD NOT  
HAVE FIT IN...

I UNDERSTAND THAT  
YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE  
FOR THIS GREAT  
DECISION, HERR  
FRANKENSTEIN!

OH, I THINK YOUR DAUGHTER  
WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE  
MADE THE SAME CHOICE! I'M  
GLAD TO BE ABLE TO SHARE  
A LITTLE OF THEIR HAPPY-  
NESS!



KARL BURST THROUGH THE TIMING TO FACE HEIN-  
RICH AND LOUISA WITH A PROPANE EXPLETIVE. HE  
RAISED HIS GUN TO FIRE! HEINRICH LEAPED!



I'M SORRY, HELL YOU, HEINRICH!  
YOU'LL NEVER MARRY LOUISA!

BUT THAT HAPPINESS WAS NOT TO BE LONG-LIVED. A  
MOMENT LATER, KARL, BEREFT, PUSHED HIS WAY IN! HE  
WAS DRUNK... AND ANGRY...



GET GUTTA MY  
WAY! LET ME IN!

WHA... IT'S  
KARL!

LOOK OUT! HE'S  
GOT A GUN!

THE IMPACT OF HEINRICH'S BODY JOLTED KARL, DIS-  
TURBING HIS AIM AS THE GUN BLASTED.



LOVE, SHRIEL SCREAMS AND HOWLS SHOUTS EMANATED FROM THE MASS  
OF CONFUSED, FRIGHTENED GUESTS. I SHOULDERED MY WAY THROUGH THEM  
TO FIND HEINRICH AND KARL BOTH STARING DUMMLY DOWN AT THE LIMP  
BODY OF LOUISA THAT RAPIDLY DEGENERATED INTO A GREENISH-BLACK  
BLOB OF VILE, STINKING DECAY! A MURDER... FIFTY YEARS WORN... SHOT!



HEE, HEE! GOING, GOING, SPOKE!  
THAT'S ALL, LOUISA WAS... BOOBY,  
BOOBY BURN! KARL, WHAT'S  
CHARGED WITH MURDER 'CAUSE  
NOBODY COULD PROVE THERE WAS  
ANY BOOBY! HEE! HEINRICH WOUND  
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## Engineer's Discovery Stops it Quick

### Without A Cent For Mechanical Repairs!

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|         | mm Sec.  | mm Sec.  | mm Sec.  | mm Sec.  | mm Sec.  | mm Sec.  |
| Average | 650 Sec. | 675 Sec. | 675 Sec. | 675 Sec. | 675 Sec. | 675 Sec. |
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**Figure 1**

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